

Everybody's Got a Story: Examining the Building of Empathy and Understanding for the Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander through Digital Storytelling

by

Stephanie Thompson

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Abstract

Digital storytelling as a pedagogical practice has been extensively explored as a means of increasing engagement, developing 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication, and refining digital literacies in students. However, there is a lack of data on how the use of multimodal digital tools can be used to explore pervasive social issues such as bullying in adolescents. In this study, a group of grade seven students provided their views and self-assessed their levels of empathy and understanding for victims of bullying, bullies and bystanders prior to and after the completion of a digital storytelling project. Using Likert scale data, along with an in-depth content analysis of the stories and presentations the students produced, the study explored whether participation in this digital storytelling project led to a noticeable and measurable impact on their understanding of and empathy for victims of bullying, bullies and bystanders.

Key Words: digital storytelling, bullying, engagement, 21st century skills, digital literacies, empathy, social awareness

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

Despite increased attention in the international community of professional education, bullying in schools continues to be a widespread, significant issue (Mitchell & Borg, 2012; Olweus, 1993; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt & Hymel, 2010). Over the past several years, bullying and cyberbullying have gained increasing media attention due to the number of serious occurrences, particularly in school environments (Hong & Espelage, 2012). According to the Canadian Council on Learning (2008), on an international scale of 35 countries, Canada has the ninth highest rate of bullying among 13-year-olds. Additionally, a large-scale longitudinal study conducted in Europe and North America reported that at least one in three adolescent students in Canada have reported being bullied recently (Molcho, Craig, Due, Pickett, Harel-Fisch, Overpeck, & HBSC Bullying Writing Group, 2009). Rising rates of bullying have led to a corresponding increase in bullying prevention education programs in schools (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt & Hymel, 2010; Tsai, Tseng & Weng, 2011), and in the responsibility of teachers to not only be vigilant in reporting incidents of bullying, but to weave anti-bullying strategies and awareness techniques into their pedagogical practices (Olweus, 1993).

Several studies have examined the efficacy of bullying prevention programs in schools (Beran, Tutty & Steinrath, 2004; Flygare, Gill & Johansson, 2013) and reported mixed results. In a recent Swedish study of eight anti-bullying programs, results showed little empirical evidence to support such programs aimed at targeting bullying in schools (Flygare, Gill & Johansson, 2013). In a separate study examining research surrounding anti-bullying initiatives, Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt & Hymel (2010) found that most school-based anti-bullying programs have had minimal impact in reducing behaviours associated with bullying. However, a

number of classroom-based initiatives such as the use of class magazines (Almeda, 2012), young adult literature (Hillsberg & Spak, 2006), and non-fiction materials (Ansbach, 2012) have shown promise in increasing empathy and encouraging positive social action against bullying.

Providing students with opportunities to read about bullying (Hillsberg & Spak, 2006) and to write narratives offers an effective way of reducing the power of bullying in the school environment and assisting teachers in diminishing the effects of bullying in their students' lives (Olweus, 1993). Combining the power of narrative writing with the multimodal facilities of digital storytelling offers the multi-tiered benefits of increasing engagement in the topic (Sadik, 2008), enhancing teaching and learning (Xu, Park & Baek, 2011), and building empathy and social responsibility for those affected by bullying (Hughes & Tolley, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of digital storytelling and its impact on the level of empathy and understanding that adolescent students have for the bully, the bullied and the bystander. The study also examined the efficacy of digital storytelling as a way of engaging students in the topic of bullying, of encouraging critical thinking about the effects of bullying and how it can be prevented, and of developing other 21st century skills, such as creativity, communication, collaboration (Czarnecki, 2009; Trilling & Fadel, 2009; "Partnership for 21st Century Skills," 2011) and digital literacies. The research was conducted by the classroom teacher during the course of regular instructional time and made use of the tools and multimodal elements that today's learners engage with so frequently, readily and enthusiastically in their out-of-school lives.

Although digital storytelling has been studied as a vehicle for encouraging social responsibility in adolescents, there has until recently, been a paucity of research in the specific area of digital storytelling to raise awareness of, to explore the reasons behind, and to prevent future bullying episodes. This research intends to contribute to this bank of knowledge,

specifically in the realm of raising understanding and empathy for the bully, the bullied and the bystander through digital storytelling. By having the students explore the topic, research the impact and various types of bullying, and by giving them an opportunity to work collaboratively and creatively to construct and showcase their stories, it was hoped that the project would increase empathy in the students for the victims of bullying, build their understanding of what leads to bullying behaviour, and move students away from the role of the bystander in favour of taking appropriate, positive action in ameliorating or preventing bullying situations.

In this study, a group of grade seven students provided their views and self-assessed their levels of empathy and understanding for victims of bullying, bullies and bystanders using a Likert scale prior to and after the completion of a digital storytelling project. Using this data, along with an in-depth content analysis of the stories and presentations the students produced, the study explored whether participation in this digital storytelling project led to a noticeable and measurable impact on their understanding of and empathy for victims of bullying, bullies and bystanders.

Additionally, the research examined the effectiveness of digital storytelling in increasing engagement in the topic of bullying, in developing 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication, in refining the use of multimodal digital elements to express the ideas and feelings of the students with respect to this topic, and in exploring some of the possible reasons for bullying as well as how to prevent future bullying episodes.

1.2. Research Goals

This research study sought to answer the question, “In what ways does the creation, presentation and subsequent class discussion of digital stories impact the understanding of and empathy for the bully, the bullied and the bystander?”

2. Theoretical Review

2.1. Overview

Digital storytelling as a performative, technological, pedagogical tool fits squarely into a number of theoretical frameworks including Mishra & Koehler's (2009) TPACK (Technology, Pedagogy and Content Knowledge) framework, Barrett's (2006) Four Student-Centred Learning Strategies, and Bauman & Briggs' (1990) Performance and Social Power theory. With its multimodal components and flexibility in terms of content, format, and subject area (Wang & Zhan, 2010), digital stories can be a pedagogically robust, engaging, and highly reflective activity (Sadik, 2008). They offer students a voice with which to share their ideas and emotions on a wide range of authentic, personally meaningful (Robin, 2008) and socially important topics, essentially sealing connections between external events and "internal awakenings" (Hull & Katz, 2006, p. 45). The three frameworks interconnect and overlap in their characteristics and in the various benefits of digital storytelling to today's learners. Clearly, technology is the common thread that is woven throughout the three models and is the foundation of digital storytelling. Additionally, when students are provided with self-directed, project-based learning opportunities such as digital storytelling to explore content on their own terms, self-reflection, deep learning, and expression of individual student voice naturally occur, all of which are components of the three frameworks. Each of the three individual theoretical models is discussed in detail in the next section.

2.2. Theoretical Models

2.2.1. Technology, Pedagogy and Content Knowledge

By combining digital storytelling with effective use of technology that enhances learning, pedagogy and content knowledge or TPACK (Mishra & Koehler, 2009), Robin (2008) believes

that teachers can motivate students to learn new content such as anti-bullying strategies using multimodal technologies, and that significant gains can be made in the areas of higher-order thinking and problem solving abilities such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation (Forehand, 2005) and the application of information through presentation of information using digital resources.

At the heart of TPCK lies the idea that new technologies offer richer and deeper representations of content (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Mishra and Koehler also argue that in order to develop the desired content, it is necessary to effectively combine three important sources of knowledge: new technologies, good pedagogy and appropriate content.

Mishra & Koehler (2006) believe technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK) is an emergent type of knowledge that transcends the three components and forms the basis of good teaching practices. It involves using technology more constructively to teach content and in a way that makes concepts easier to learn by employing pedagogical techniques that build on existing knowledge, thereby developing new epistemologies and strengthening old ones. TPCK enables students to participate in authentic activities that honour the deep connections between technology, subject matter (content) and the method of instruction (pedagogical strategy) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). This conceptually based theoretical framework can improve teaching strategies as well as expand the range of topics that can be explored, as it focuses on the relationship between content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and technological knowledge. Hicks (2006) suggests that this framework may help teachers think about and use technology in critical, creative and responsible ways.

2.2.2. Four Student-Centred Learning Strategies

As digital storytelling is a student-centred way of promoting active self-expression, it is conducive to the application of Barrett's (2006) four student-centred learning strategies; student

engagement, reflection for deep learning, integration of technology, and project-based learning (Sadik, 2008; Suwardy, 2012; Wang & Zhan, 2010).

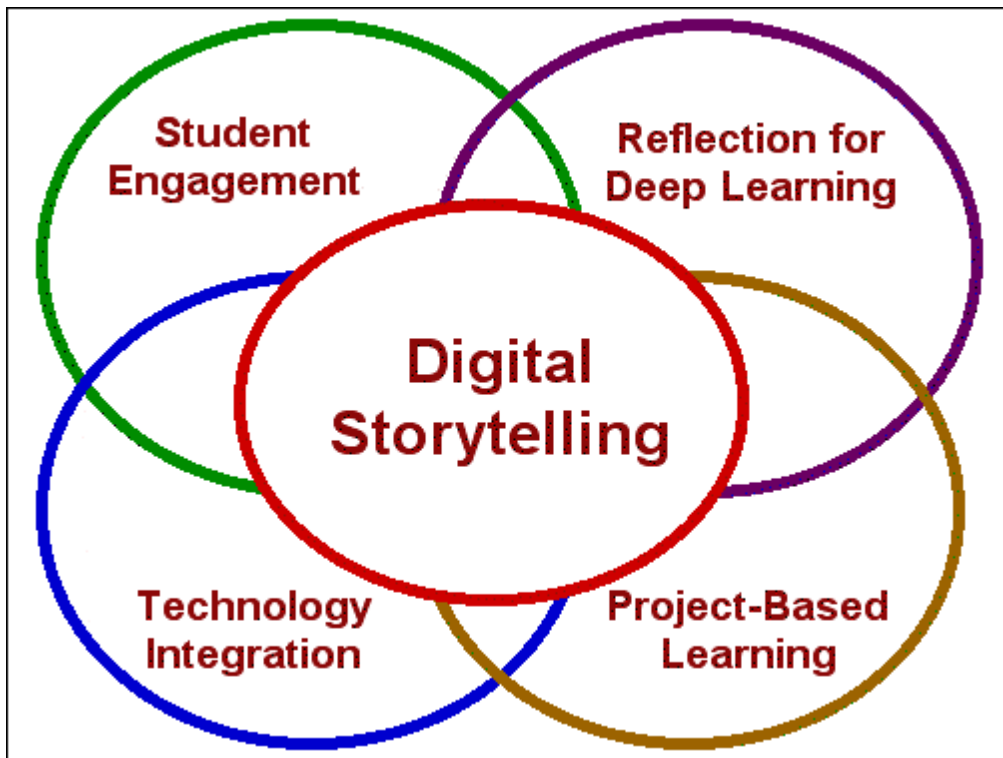


Figure 1. Convergence of Barrett's (2006) four student-centred learning strategies

As illustrated in Figure 1, Barrett's framework places digital storytelling at the centre of her constructivist approach to project-based learning. According to Barrett (2006), learner ownership and engagement are increased, student voice is expanded, personalities are revealed, and authors' reflections and uniqueness are more fully expressed through the multimodal affordances and integrative technological capabilities of digital storytelling. She describes it as a tool that offers opportunities for deep learning that connects the author and audience in a meaningful and emotional way while providing a depth and richness of content that is unavailable in a print text (ibid.). Constructivists such as Barrett (2006) and Sadik (2008) view students as constructive agents and believe that knowledge is built as opposed to passively received (Spivey, 1997) through such constructivist strategies as digital storytelling where

students engage in collaboration, cooperation, critical thinking, and reflection (Sadik, 2008).

Jonassen and Carr (2000) agree and state that in order to help students construct knowledge they must be given opportunities to learn through the use of a variety of digital tools and resources.

Suwardy, Pan & Seow (2012) also concur, adding that digital storytelling employs the powerful force of audio and visual effects to engage the visual and auditory senses of students in ways that print materials such as textbooks could never accomplish. Digital storytelling allows abstract content to become more accessible to learners and opens dialogues about a variety of important topics, which can potentially engage students (Pounsford, 2007). Students become more willing to listen carefully to the stories and to relate them to their own lives, experiences and prior knowledge (Suwardy, Pan & Seow, 2012). Consequently, students participate more, and are more engaged and more aware of the ideas being presented, particularly since digital stories are student-driven and student-led productions. It follows that students would engage in reflective learning and deeper thinking as they personalize these experiences (Sandars, Murray & Pellow, 2008).

By creating and telling stories of what happens in the world, learners are exposed to a body of knowledge that already exists and they can further construct and develop their own understandings by reflecting on their learning processes and life experiences (Wang & Zhan, 2010). Xu, Park and Baek (2011) suggest that introducing digital storytelling into the classroom can be an effective method of capturing and maintaining students' attention. In conceptualizing, creating, developing, and showcasing their digital stories, students learn by doing (Xu et al., 2011), building knowledge as opposed to receiving it as passive recipients (Sadik, 2008). Creating digital stories engage students in reflective practice and active learning by giving them an opportunity to produce meaningful products (Wang & Zhan, 2010). Additionally, digital

stories provide a creative and open-ended environment (Sadik, 2008) in which students can conduct self-exploration and self-discovery.

2.2.3. Performance and Social Power

Bauman and Briggs' (1990) framework recognizes the relationship "between performance and its wider sociocultural and political contexts" (Hull & Katz, 2006, p. 61), how agent-centred performances such as digital stories expand notions of what it means to perform a text and how they may signal "an awareness and exercise of social power" (Hull & Katz, 2006, p. 56). According to Hull & Katz (2006), "digital stories, as instances of verbal performance, do not simply reflect social life, but have the capacity to comment critically on it as well" (p. 69). By providing students with opportunities to explore important social issues that are relevant and impactful in their lives, digital storytelling gives young adolescents not only a voice with which to express their emotions, feelings and ideas but also the power to impact the public sphere and ultimately enact real societal change (Poletti, 2011; Skouge & Rao, 2009).

2.3. Summary

In combining new technologies with pedagogical strategies that focus on constructivism and building on prior knowledge in order to produce and perform digital texts that reflect student views and concerns, these three frameworks help to explain how digital storytelling affords deeper, richer layers of content than could be constructed with traditional print resources. Additionally, the frameworks illustrate how digital storytelling can be used to engage and motivate students to explore topics such as bullying and to challenge and reform prevailing societal views and norms.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Overview

There is an abundance of literature and research that has been conducted in the distinct areas of digital storytelling, school bullying, and developing empathy in teenaged students. Primarily, the research focus to date has been on the power of digital storytelling to increase student engagement, to develop 21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration (Czarnecki, 2009; Trilling & Fadel, 2009; “Partnership for 21st Century Skills,” 2011), to refine digital literacies in students and to build empathy and social awareness. A research gap exists in the specific area of digital storytelling as a tool to impact the level of empathy and understanding that students have for the bully, the bullied, and the bystander.

The review of the literature provides a comprehensive summary of some of the recent work that has been done to conclusively link digital storytelling to an increase in student engagement, in the development of 21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration, in the refinement of digital literacies and in the building of empathy, social awareness and responsibility. In Figure 2, the benefits of digital storytelling in these four areas are shown graphically and are discussed in the review of literature that follows.

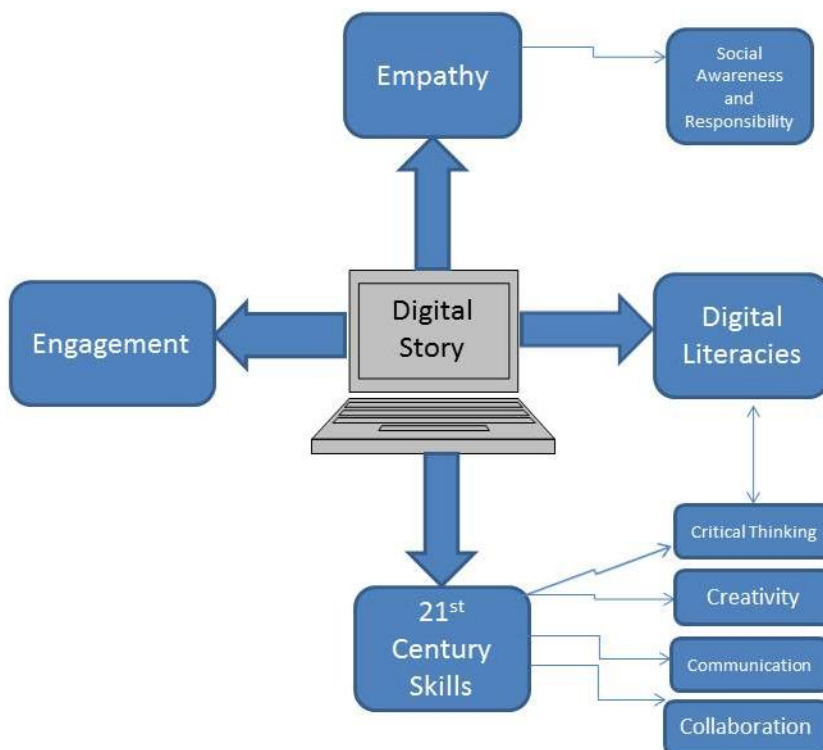


Figure 2. Overview of benefits of digital storytelling discussed in the review of the literature

3.2. Increasing Student Engagement

Much investigation has been done to examine the correlation between student engagement and learning. Student engagement can be defined as a combination of a student's short-term attention span and the extent to which classroom activities relate to a student's personal goals and development of self-efficacy (Marzano, Pickering & Heflebower, 2011). Marzano and Pickering (2011) believe that engagement results when students answer in the affirmative to the questions: "Am I interested?" "Is this important?" and "Can I do this?" (p. 2)

Research has shown that the engagement of learners is paramount to their success in learning (Herrington, Oliver & Reeves, 2003). Today's learners are no exception; however, students of today demand access to an increased quantity of information as well as an increase in the availability of emerging technologies in the classroom (Yang & Wu, 2012). According to Yang and Wu (2012), digital storytelling "goes beyond the capabilities of traditional storytelling by generating student interest, concentration and motivation, facilitating student collaboration and organization of ideas, helping students to comprehend complex learning content, and presenting knowledge in an adaptive and meaningful manner" (p. 340).

The key to engaging students in the learning process is by integrating technology into meaningful activities that enable the students to construct their own knowledge in ways that did not exist prior to the advent of new technologies (Dexter, Anderson & Becker, 1999; Sadik, 2008; Trilling & Hood, 2009). According to Robin (2008), "a multimedia-rich digital story can serve as an anticipatory set or *hook* to capture the attention of students" (p. 224) and can also increase the motivation for students to explore new ideas (Yang & Wu, 2012).

Students who are provided with the opportunity to construct their own understandings in a flexible, media-rich and creative environment may demonstrate an increased level of motivation as they assume responsibility for their own learning (Karakoyun & Eristi, 2011).

According to Wang and Zhan (2010), “through the construction of knowledge and the construction of personally meaningful artifacts, learners can achieve the best learning” (p. 79). Additionally, active participation of the students in digital storytelling increases their motivation, makes lessons more enjoyable and the subject matter taught more interesting (Karakoyun & Eristi, 2011).

3.3. Developing 21st Century Skills

Digital storytelling as a learning experience, according to Jakes and Brennan (2005) encompasses many skills that students will be expected to know and to perform in the 21st century. According to the Framework for 21st Century Learning, (Partnership for 21st Century Skills), “learning and innovation skills are what separate students who are prepared for increasingly complex life and work environments in today’s world and those who are not. They include creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration” (p. 2). Students today are challenged to build their capacity for innovation, collaboration, collective problem solving and critical thinking in a dynamic digital environment (Hamel, 2007; ISTE, 2007). Some of the 21st century competencies that are expected by educators include collaborative, multimodal, creative and original media works such as digital stories (Greenhow, Robelia & Hughes, 2009; ISTE, 2007; Robin, 2008). There is an increased emphasis on the learner and his or her life experiences and choices, and “the cognitive, social, and cultural dimensions of how technology is used in various settings” (Greenhow, Robelia & Hughes, 2009, p. 248). In order to support students in this area of new learning, teachers are expected to “co-learn, model, and facilitate the development of such competencies” (ibid., p. 248).

Sadik (2008) believes that learning which is designed from a constructivist approach encourages students to learn in a social setting, which enables them to construct their own knowledge, solve problems and to demonstrate creativity and critical thinking skills. Xu, Park and Baek (2011) agree, and note that the creation of digital stories provides students with an opportunity to “apply communication skills, work collaboratively, and think critically while addressing content and technology standards” (p. 189). Karakoyun & Eristi (2011) concur, adding that by sharing their work with peers, students also develop the skills to critique their own and others’ work, which in turn can improve their social, emotional and intellectual learning.

When conceptualizing and creating their own digital stories, students must engage in a great deal of critical thinking (Yang & Wu, 2012). As they construct their stories, they must use reflection, evaluation, synthesis and deductive reasoning in order to persuade their audience (Karakoyun & Eristi, 2011; Yang & Wu, 2012). The effective use of authentic tasks such as digital storytelling is an example of what Sadik (2008) refers to as meaningful technology integration within the learning environment. Digital stories offer students an opportunity to work collaboratively as well as creatively while at the same time practising and honing their developing technological skills, as required by school curricula (Robin, 2006; Xu, Park & Baek, 2011).

The integration of digital storytelling into a language program can lead to improvements in the areas of reading, writing, oral communication and listening skills (Sadik, 2008; Tsou, Wang & Tzeng, 2006). Similarly, Gakher, and Thompson (2007) believe that digital storytelling can lead to an improvement in writing skills and media literacy by offering students opportunities to write in diverse ways, to use their creativity in their writing and by requiring them to organize their thinking throughout the process.

Wang and Zhan (2010) propose that “digital storytelling becomes an even more effective means of communication because narration is enhanced by visual aids, still images, music and the authors’ voice, which expresses emotions” (p. 79). Robin (2008) believes that giving students the opportunity to create their own stories delivers the additional benefit of bestowing them with what he too refers to as 21st century skills (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2004), which he describes as the combination of digital, global, visual, information and technology literacies. These skills refer to proficiencies in reading, understanding, communicating and analyzing information in an ever-expanding community (Robin, 2008). Furthermore, he believes that overall communication skills are improved as students learn to research topics, ask questions, organize their thoughts, share opinions and construct narrative works (Robin, 2008).

In order to become proficient in the creation of a digital story, students must master a variety of communication and literacy skills such as narration, composition writing and editing, digital and media literacy and proficiency in technology (Xu et al., 2011); students must become producers or designers rather than merely consumers of text (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The results of a study conducted by Sadik in Egyptian classrooms showed that digital storytelling improved students’ understandings of curricular content as well as their skills in the areas of knowledge and use of technology, collaboration with peers, and communication (Sadik, 2008), which can all be considered to be vital skills for 21st century learners.

3.4. Refining Digital Literacies

Storytelling has long been an inherent part of North American culture as a means of distributing knowledge and sharing understandings (Wang & Zhan, 2010). It has expanded from the exchange of oral tales from person to person, to the use of multimodal digital texts transmitted to a potentially limitless audience.

The benefits of pedagogical practices that expose students not only to traditional print and oral literacies but also to the varied multimodal and visual representations that are available today have been written about extensively in the literature (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Hughes, 2009; Knobel & Lankshear, 2006; Kress, 2000, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 1998; Luke, 1996; New London Group, 1996). However, based on the research into digital literacies, today's students possess digital skillsets that remain underutilized in the classroom environment (Alvermann, 2002; Gee, 2003; Hughes, 2009; Kress, 2003).

The traditional definition of literacies has changed over time and now encompasses knowledge about how texts are created and how “multimodal forms of representation work together to convey meaning” (Hughes, 2009, p. 260). According to Lankshear & Knobel, (2008) it is important to refer to digital literacies in its pluralized form because of the many forms of digital literacy that exist, and because of “the strength and usefulness of a sociocultural perspective on literacy as practice, according to which literacy is best understood as literacies” (p. 2). According to Gee, Hull & Lankshear (1996), in order to read particular texts, students must be embedded in a social practice wherein they read, talk about, hold beliefs about and socially interact over texts in certain ways. Texts such as digital stories require these social practices in order for authentic, rich meaning-making to occur. Digital storytelling includes a number of literacies including digital literacy, technical literacy, informational literacy and multicultural literacy (Robin, 2008). Kress (2003) believes that within a short time, the screen will dominate all of our communication practices, which necessarily affects how we will read, understand and construct our own texts (Hughes, 2009). Digital literacies are both multidimensional and interactive, and our students need to be offered opportunities in school to exercise their digital muscles and to further develop their knowledge using the digital tools that are ubiquitous in their out-of-school lives (Hughes, 2009; Pool, 1997; Porter, 1997).

3.5. Building Empathy, Understanding and Social Awareness

Digital storytelling can be described as combining the ancient art of oral storytelling with an assortment of technical tools in order to design personalized tales using images, graphics, music and sound, in combination with the author's own voice (Porter, 2005). According to Poletti (2011), it was developed in the 1990s in San Francisco by the Centre for Digital Storytelling as a means of giving voice to ordinary and marginalized groups, and providing them with a broader public forum. The use of digital storytelling in the adolescent classroom allows students to address complex social issues in their writing, thereby expressing their opinions and passions (Simmons, 2012), and allowing them to develop their sense of identity from student to concerned social activist (Epstein, 2010). According to Czarnecki (2009), "by using digital media to research a serious issue and then convey messages about it to other people, the students participate[d] in a commendable act of teaching and awareness-raising" (p. 18) or what the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) would call digital citizenship. Such social action projects, according to Golden and Christensen (2008) are academically rigorous and provide students with the skills they will need to transfer their learning into their communities to benefit society as a whole (Simmons, 2012).

Generally, empathy can be defined as the act of perceiving, experiencing and responding to the emotional state of another person (Barker, 2003). More specifically, social empathy, according to Segal (2011) is "the ability to understand people by perceiving or experiencing their life situations and as a result gaining insight into structural inequalities and disparities" (p. 266). Digital stories can be an authentic, powerful and empathetic tool for bringing the voices of ordinary and marginalized people into the public sphere (Poletti, 2011) by raising awareness of these social issues.

Social responsibility, according to Pancer & Pratt (1999) is a sense of connectedness to those individuals who are outside of one's family and circle of friends and "an obligation to help those in the community, nation or society at large who are in need" (p. 38). In order to encourage students to develop a deep sense of social responsibility, it is up to educators to provide opportunities for students to gain "an accurate empathic perspective about the conditions and needs of others" (Segal, 2011). As Segal (2001) states, "the ability to experience empathy through an accurate contextual lens deepens our understanding of society, leads to a belief in social responsibility, and can result in social justice" (p. 271). Karakoyun & Eristi (2011) agree and add that collaborating and sharing an activity through digital storytelling creates mutual respect (Kieler, 2010), helps students understand one another better, and assists in building empathy (Karakoyun & Eristi, 2011).

3.6. Bullying

Although there are differing views in the literature (Byrne, 1993; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Tattum, 1997), for a behaviour to be considered bullying there is a general agreement that three main elements must be present. The behaviour must be repetitive, it must involve an inequity in the balance of power and there must be a conscious intention to harm (Olweus, 1993). According to Olweus (1993), "a person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons" (p. 9). These negative actions can take many forms. In general, bullying is a subset of aggression that can be categorized into three main types of behaviour: relational, verbal and physical (Olweus, 2003). These behaviours may manifest through indirect ways such as making unkind faces or gestures, spreading rumours or gossip, intentionally excluding individuals from a group or more directly through name calling, teasing, verbal threats or physical contact (Olweus, 2003). It is important to also

acknowledge the growing problem of cyberbullying or the use of digital media as a bullying tool that is becoming increasingly pervasive in the lives of today's youth. Cyberbullying can be defined as repeated, intentional harm inflicted "through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, p. 5). This type of bullying is considered both relational and verbal as it often includes the spreading of gossip or rumours, the use of insults and threats and the goal of excluding individuals from prescribed peer groups (Raskauskas, 2010).

Lee (2010) believes that bullying can have devastating consequences. Coloroso (2003) agrees stating, "Bullying is a life-and-death issue that we ignore at our children's peril" (p. xv). Coloroso believes that it is not only the victims of bullying who must endure the consequences of bullying, but also bullies who often grow up to be adults who continue to bully, and are "at increased risk of bullying their own children, failing at interpersonal relationships, losing jobs, and ending up in jail" (p. xvi). Similarly, bystanders of bullying also feel the negative effects whether they choose to walk away, to join the bullying activity or to intervene on the victim's behalf (Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005). It is clear that as a society we have an important responsibility to not only educate our children about the effects of bullying but to take the necessary steps towards dismantling and even preventing bullying from affecting and victimizing future generations.

3.7. Summary

A considerable body of research exists in the separate fields of digital storytelling, bullying in schools and developing empathy and social awareness in adolescent learners. What is missing from this research into effective anti-bullying strategies in schools is the use of new

media such as digital storytelling at the classroom level to engage today's students in such socially relevant topics such as bullying and cyberbullying.

The existing research offers a number of specific benefits of employing digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool in the classroom. Students are engaged in the projects, due to the open-endedness, flexibility and the digital nature of the tasks (Karakoyun & Eristi, 2011; Sadik, 2008). In the creation of their stories, they are able to develop their creative problem solving skills as well as hone their communication and collaboration abilities (Karakoyun & Eristi, 2011). In the process, the multimodal affordances of digital storytelling build students' digital literacy skills and knowledge and allow them the freedom to express their ideas, views and emotions about a wide range of social issues (Karakoyun & Eristi, 2011; Ohler, 2005; Poletti, 2011). One specific area that has received little attention is in how digital storytelling can explore, address and increase empathy and understanding in students for victims of bullying, perpetrators of bullying and the bystanders who witness bullying but choose not to intervene.

This research project, in its efforts to fill this research gap, aimed to use the multimodality and the narrative power of digital storytelling to allow students to identify the emotional effects of bullying and to reflect upon their consequences, which may ultimately lead to a reduction in or prevention of future bullying and cyberbullying events in their lives.

3.8. Purpose of Study

Although the specific research goal of the paper was to explore digital storytelling as a means of increasing understanding of and empathy for the bully, the bullied and the bystander, it also briefly examined and commented on some of the many benefits of digital storytelling in increasing levels of engagement in the students in the topic of bullying, in building 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration, and in developing

students' understanding of digital literacies by participating in an anti-bullying digital story project. Adolescent bullying is an issue that is in the forefront on any given school day, and it is one that requires teachers to devise innovative and creative interventions and proactive approaches to eradicate. By participating in this project, the researcher sought to determine if researching, creating, presenting, viewing, deconstructing and discussing student-created digital stories could make a noticeable impact on a group of students' understanding and empathy, which might lead to a raised awareness of and increased willingness to mediate, resolve or prevent episodes of bullying in their lives. Above all else, it was this component of raising awareness of the pervasive social issue of adolescent bullying and inspiring students to become socially responsible agents of change that was the motivation for the researcher to embark upon the digital storytelling journey described in this paper.

4. Methodology

4.1. Overview

A mixed methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies was used in this project. In terms of quantitative data, a six question Likert scale survey was conducted prior to the digital story assignment in order to provide a baseline measurement of the students' self-assessed levels of empathy for and understanding of the bully, the bullied and the bystander. This was followed by an identical survey upon completion of the project. The ordinal Likert scale data were analyzed in terms of frequencies, percentages, means and modes to determine the impact that the digital story assignment had on the students in terms of their levels of empathy and understanding.

With respect to qualitative data, in order to expand on the quantitative data provided in the Likert scale surveys, students were asked to provide open-ended responses to the same six

questions in the surveys. The digital stories themselves as well as the presentation of the stories were videotaped, transcribed and analyzed for common themes. Additionally, a case study approach was used to collect detailed data related to how the students engaged with and learned from the experience of digital storytelling. According to Yin (2003), case study is “an empirical inquiry which focuses on a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p. 14) and is suitable for studying complex social phenomena [such as bullying]. According to Cohen and Manion (2000), “significance rather than frequency is a hallmark of case studies, offering the researcher an insight into the real dynamics of situations and people” (p. 258). One of the many advantages of this approach was that it allowed for close collaboration between researcher and participants, while enabling participants to share their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999), describe their views and express their ideas, allowing the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the participants’ actions by viewing it through a variety of lenses (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The use of a qualitative case study methodology in this research project also embraced the constructivist paradigm (Yin, 2003) as it facilitated exploration of a topic within its particular context using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). As Bruce (2009) states, case studies “provide the best articulation of adolescents’ media literacy processes, especially as much of the emergent forms of their use has not been studied” (p. 302). The case study method was also appropriate for studying a ‘bounded system,’ that is, the thoughts and actions of participating students or the learning-community connection of a particular education setting, so as to understand it as it functions under natural conditions (Stake, 2000). The project used purposive and convenience sampling techniques which were appropriate for this research since it focused on a narrow segment of learners (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) that were readily accessible to the researcher.

As the researcher in this study was also the classroom teacher of the research subjects, an

action research methodology was felt to be appropriate. As stated by Johnson (1993), action research, particularly when undertaken by teachers in a classroom environment offers a collaborative, naturalistic approach, by making use of “participant-observation techniques of ethnographic research” and includes components of case study methodology (Belanger, 1992, p. 2). Furthermore, action research offers teachers an opportunity to build their research skills and to increase their awareness of the possibilities and options for change (Johnson, 1993). It is concerned primarily with pursuing appropriate and practical solutions to social issues that are of great concern to people and their communities. It is grounded in a worldview that is participatory in nature and that endeavours to unite action and reflection with theory and practice in order to provide benefits to society (Reason & Bradbury, 2003). This methodology embraces the anti-positivistic view that knowledge is socially constructed and that research is “embedded within a system of values” (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & McGuire, 2009, p. 11). At its core, participatory action research is “a deeply relational approach to knowledge creation and social change” (Brydon-Miller & McGuire, 2009, p. 87). It affirms the idea that individuals can understand and change their lives through education, research and action. Participatory action research challenges existing power structures and provides opportunities to develop solutions to the problems that are facing our communities and schools (Brydon-Miller & McGuire, 2009).

By measuring the levels of empathy and understanding for the bully, the bullied and the bystander before and after the digital storytelling assignment via quantitative and qualitative surveys, and by comparing these results with analyses of the stories, transcribed student comments and in-depth case studies, this participatory action research project explored the impact of digital storytelling on empathy and understanding for the bully, the bullied and the bystander on a group of twelve and thirteen-year olds, with a view to uniting action and reflection with theory and practice, in order to drive social change (Reason & Bradbury, 2003).

4.2. Context and Sample Description

The setting for the study was a public elementary school in a suburban area of southern Ontario with a population of approximately 125 000, according to the Statistics Canada 2011 Census of Population. The school is situated in an affluent neighbourhood with an average family income of \$92 000 in the area, according to the Fraser Institute (2012) report, and many of the parents of the students are professionals. The classroom teacher/researcher had 10 years of teaching experience and worked at the school as a homeroom and French teacher of intermediate students (grades seven and eight) for the previous eight years.

Twenty-two grade seven students participated in the study, out of a class of 23 students. The students came from a variety of cultural backgrounds; five students were of Chinese descent, three were of Indian descent, one student was of Japanese descent, one student was of Serbian descent and one student was of Polish descent. All of the students spoke English as their first language. Within the class, there were 15 boys and seven girls, all of whom were born in 2000, and whose ages ranged between 12 and 13 years. The participants came to the study with varying degrees of technological skills; none had any prior experience in using the tools required to create digital stories (Photo Story, Movie Maker or iMovie).

Prior to beginning the project, the students participated in a number of activities surrounding bullying. In order to evoke their prior knowledge and to give them a sense of how prevalent bullying is, the students and classroom teacher began the unit by sharing their own personal experiences in the role of the bully, the bullied and the bystander. They then took part in literature circles, digital centres containing anti-bullying websites, magazine articles and videos, and listened to guest speakers. A great deal of dialogue during this time frame centred around identifying the main types of bullying, the various roles that can be played in bullying and the differences between having understanding of and empathy for the victims of bullying,

the bully and the bystander. For example, the students read a magazine article about a blind girl who was bullied at her school due to her disability and then they engaged in a discussion about the differences between understanding how the author of the story felt and feeling compassion for the author because of her situation. At the end of the unit and just prior to commencing the digital storytelling assignment, the students completed the pre-survey to determine their levels of empathy for and understanding of the bully, the bullied and the bystander.

4.3. Data Collection

Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and compared in this research project in order to ensure reliability, validity, triangulation, and to provide a deeper explanation of the information by studying it from several standpoints (Cohen & Manion, 2000).

Triangulation is particularly important in case study research as the review of the various perspectives supports the findings and arguments for its contributions to research (Yin, 2003).

By examining the quantitative data collected using a Likert scale survey and the same set of questions before and after the digital storytelling project, the researcher sought to ensure internal consistency. The researcher then compiled interpretations of several types of qualitative data comprised of student responses to open-ended questions and the transcribed data from video-taped performances and discussions of the digital stories. This was done to ensure qualitative reliability. By employing several different sources of data and methods of collection, through triangulation of these data, by providing rich descriptions of the findings and by conducting the research in an authentic, naturalistic setting, the qualitative validity of the research was strengthened.

4.3.1. Quantitative Data

The quantitative research component was designed to capture attitudinal data using Likert scale survey research methodology. The four point Likert scale was chosen as students were familiar with a four-level grading system in school which measures their level of achievement against provincial standards. The four levels gave the students a starting point from which to self-assess their levels of understanding and empathy as the language in the survey was similar to this grading system. For example, on a typical student scoring rubric, level one indicates that the student is meeting the expectations with limited (effectiveness), level two indicates some (effectiveness), level three indicates a considerable amount (of effectiveness) and level four indicates a great deal (of effectiveness). An additional rationale for the choice of four points was that research conducted by Chang (1994) showed a greater reliability with a four-point scale than with a six-point scale. Students responded to the same six questions in the form of pre- and post-surveys conducted before and after the digital story project. The questions themselves were based on the project's research question and asked how well the students *understood* the feelings of each of the bully, the bullied and the bystander, and how much they *empathized with* the feelings of each of the bully, the bullied and the bystander. According to Cohen and Manion (2000), rating scales are particularly useful for "tapping attitudes, perceptions and opinions" (p. 328) especially when they are combined with open-ended questions, as was the case in this study.

Pre-Survey. Prior to starting their digital stories, participants were invited to complete an anonymous, secure electronic survey. In this pre-survey, a series of six questions was asked using a Likert scale, in order to determine how well students understood and empathized with the

roles of the bully, the bullied and the bystander. They were asked to provide examples and/or details of their answers in an open-ended section of the survey (see Appendix A).

Post-Survey. A post-survey was conducted after the conclusion of the digital story presentations and discussions. The pre- and post-surveys used the same questions to determine any shifts in attitudes towards bullying as a phenomenon or in the roles of the bully, the bullied and the bystander. These surveys were designed to allow for comparisons across cases and for triangulation using the written data from the surveys along with content analyses of the digital texts, the presentations and the case studies. The post-survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

4.3.2. Qualitative Data

Pre- and Post-Surveys. Student responses to the open-ended questions in the pre- and post-survey were analyzed, compared to the ordinal data from the Likert scale and coded for common themes.

Digital Story Presentations and Discussions. Initially, students played their digital stories through without commentary as the rest of the class and the classroom teacher/researcher watched and listened. This was done in order to provide the audience with a sense of the whole, before deconstruction of the stories and examination of their components and features. The digital stories were played a second time as the authors deconstructed them, explaining their choices of character, plot and various multimodal elements of the stories. Questions were posed to the authors of the stories by both the classroom teacher and the audience, stimulating further discussion and providing deeper insight into the construction and intended meaning of the digital stories. The digital stories as well as the deconstruction, explanation and ensuing discussion of the digital stories were videotaped, and the data subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Case Studies. Two of the digital stories were selected for deeper analysis of content and digital elements and how they demonstrated new understandings and increased empathy for the bully, the bullied and the bystander.

4.4. Procedure

Prior to the commencement of the project, the research study was explained to the students. Consent forms were created and handed out to the parents and students during the three way conferences (parent-teacher interviews) that had already been set up to discuss the student progress reports. This was done in order for the classroom teacher/researcher to be able to clearly explain the reason for the study and to outline its parameters. As the students participating in the study were between the ages of 12 and 13, they were required to provide consent as well as their parents/guardians. The consent letter outlined the study in detail and also advised both the participants and the parents that participation was voluntary and that they could opt out of the project at any time, without penalty. All of the consent forms were returned and kept in a sealed envelope, unread, until the commencement of the analysis of the data. The survey responses were assigned numbers and no names were attached in order to limit researcher bias. Consent was obtained for 22 out of 23 students. One student's parent would not provide consent nor did he give a reason why he did not want his child to participate in the research component. This student did, however, participate in the classroom activities; his data were just excluded at the analysis stage. The actual project took approximately five weeks of school time, during the students' daily 90-minute language arts block period. It commenced directly after an eight-week unit on bullying during which the students had an opportunity to read works of fiction related to bullying, to explore anti-bullying websites and videos and to engage in class

discussions about bullying. These activities as well as their own prior knowledge and experiences provided a starting point for their digital stories.

After completion of the pre-survey, students were given the task of creating an original digital story using iMovie, Movie Maker or Photo Story, and adding text, voiceover, images, sound, and music in order to tell their individual stories from the viewpoint of the bully, the bullied or the bystander. The students were offered the opportunity to work in small groups, in pairs or individually. Out of the 23 students, all but one elected to work in a group of two, three or four. [It should be noted that the student who worked alone had little choice as she was away on a three week vacation when the other students started working on their stories]. A total of nine digital stories were produced by the students.

The project was intentionally designed to be as open-ended as possible. Students were charged with creating their own scenarios and could use just about any tools available to them for their work. They were encouraged to write and create stories that both engaged their audiences and impacted them emotionally.

4.5. Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was conducted in several steps and in various ways in order to maximize validity, reliability and triangulation of the data. Weber (1990) recommends employing both quantitative and qualitative analysis of texts in order to provide the highest quality of content analysis. The data were organized by the research question and looked at each component individually. There were six components of the research question, which lined up to the six questions asked on the Likert scale pre- and post-surveys (see Appendix A). According to Cohen and Manion (2000), organizing data by research question consolidates the relevant information that is of interest to the researcher and “closes the loop” (p. 468) on the research

questions. This permits all of the data from the various data streams to be collated and analyzed, and “patterns, relationships, comparisons and qualifications across data types to be explored conveniently and clearly” (p. 468) so as to provide an answer to the research question.

4.5.1. Quantitative Data

Likert Scale Survey. The results of the Likert pre-survey were compared to the results of the post-survey and are displayed in table format in Appendices C and D. Individual student responses (from one to four) as well as totals per question were tabulated and comparisons were made between pre- and post-survey data. Additionally, for each section of the survey (the bully, the bullied and the bystander) the results were tabulated and analyzed to determine increases or decreases in the levels of empathy and understanding before and after the digital storytelling project. The data were presented descriptively, as frequencies and percentages in the form of “exploratory data analysis” which according to Cohen and Manion (2000) is “closely concerned with seeing what the data themselves suggest, akin to a detective following a line of evidence” (p. 507). Additionally, mean and mode values were calculated for each set of question responses.

4.5.2. Qualitative Data

Open-Ended Survey Questions. In order to gain a deeper understanding of their responses, students were asked to explain each one of their answers to the Likert scale pre- and post-survey questions in a paragraph, providing as much detail and as many examples as possible. The survey template, which was created using Survey Monkey allowed the students as much space as needed in order to complete their answers to the open-ended questions. These written responses to the pre- and post-surveys were analyzed by question to identify new patterns of understandings as a result of the digital story project. This information was compared to the

Likert scale results to compare the increases in empathy or understanding with the written comments.

In the first stage, the pre- and post-survey written responses were coded for various themes that emerged, using the theoretical constructs that grounded this research as a guide. Coding can be defined as translating information from respondents to specific categories for the purpose of analysis (Kerlinger, 1970). Special attention was paid to any new understandings surrounding bullying that the students articulated, particularly those that referenced the digital story assignment or the individual stories. These data were compared with the quantitative numerical data to find connections. This type of content analysis of the responses allows for inferences to be made when it is corroborated using other data provided (Krippendorff, 1980; Stemler, 2001). The data were also examined for new understandings of why individuals are bullied, why bullies become bullies, what the role of the bystander should be, how the digital components expressed emotion and most particularly, evidence of increased empathy for and understanding of the bully, the bullied and the bystander.

Digital Story and Presentation Transcriptions. The video tapes of the digital stories as well as the presentations of the stories were transcribed, analyzed and coded following traditional coding procedures (Kerlinger, 1970; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A content analysis was conducted and elements compared across the different stories in order to identify recurring and overlapping themes and patterns. According to Weber (1990), content analysis involves “coding, categorizing (creating meaningful categories into which the units of analysis – words, phrases, sentences etc. – can be placed), comparing (categories and making links between them), and concluding – drawing theoretical conclusions from the text” (p. 495).

The stories were compared by categories that included point of view, setting, types of bullying, the reasons for victims being targeted, home situations, resolutions and audience feedback. The results are shown in Table 1, which appears both in the Results section of this paper as well as in Appendix E: Overview of Elements of Digital Stories.

In the analysis of the digital stories, particular interest was shown to moments that might be interpreted as “turning points” (Bruner, 1994) in the development of empathy and/or emerging understandings of the effects of bullying. In each of the nine stories, the turning point was identified in the description of the story.

The digital stories were then analyzed by examining their designs and production and by comparing the written text, images and sounds from the digital texts with the data from interviews, notes and video recordings. The analysis focused on the various modes of expression (i.e. visual image, gesture, movement) and how these worked in concert to create meaning, and how they expressed the students’ emerging understandings of and empathy for the bully, the bullied and the bystander. A summary of these elements and multimodal effects can also be found in the table in Appendix E.

Case Studies. In order to further deepen the understanding of the data, individual case studies were conducted on two of the stories. These stories were chosen on the basis of the pre- and post-survey Likert scale data, the written survey responses, the focus of the stories and the impact these stories had on the audience. The case studies were examined in detail in terms of the storyline, characters, multimodal elements and effect on the audience.

Case Study One, entitled “Paradise” and written by Student #22 was selected for a number of reasons. Student #22’s pre- and post-survey results showed a substantial increase in her level of empathy and understanding, much more than most of her peers, and it was felt that it was worth exploring her story in detail in order to look for evidence of her new understandings.

The story is a creative and original production that depicts a realistic bullying situation in which the target is bullied because of her physical appearance, and more specifically her weight, which is a common trigger of bullying for adolescent girls, and a relatable theme as it was discussed at length in the student's classroom earlier in the school year. The story is told as a narration and from the viewpoint of the victim of bullying, Patricia. The details are rich and descriptive and the author paints a vivid image of the life of Patricia, which is, in the words of the student, anything but paradise.

Case Study Two, "Why Me?" was selected due to its powerful images, words and most importantly, for the effect that it had on the other students in the class. This was the only one of the nine digital stories that was told from the viewpoint of a victim of bullying who ultimately became a bully himself. Many of the students commented in their post-surveys about the fact that this digital story changed their views on bullies and increased their levels of both understanding and empathy for the bully. The story itself is compelling and dark, and the reaction of the students while they were watching it showed that it was impactful and worthy of deeper analysis.

5. Results

5.1. Pre-Survey and Post-Survey Quantitative Data

Prior to participating in the digital story assignment, students were asked six questions about their levels of each of 1) understanding of and 2) empathy for the feelings of victims of bullying, bullies and bystanders. They were asked to rate these levels on a four point Likert scale where one indicated "not at all," two indicated "some understanding or some empathy," three indicated "a good deal of understanding or empathy," and four indicated "a great deal of understanding or empathy." Students were asked to rate empathy and understanding separately

for each of the bully, the bullied and the bystander. Tables of both the pre-survey and post-survey data results can be found in Appendices C and D.

Both pre- and post-survey data were tabulated to determine totals per question and totals per student. This was calculated in order to determine whether a notable increase in scores resulted after the students had researched, designed, created, presented and discussed their digital stories. The results showed an increase in the post-survey data in several important areas:

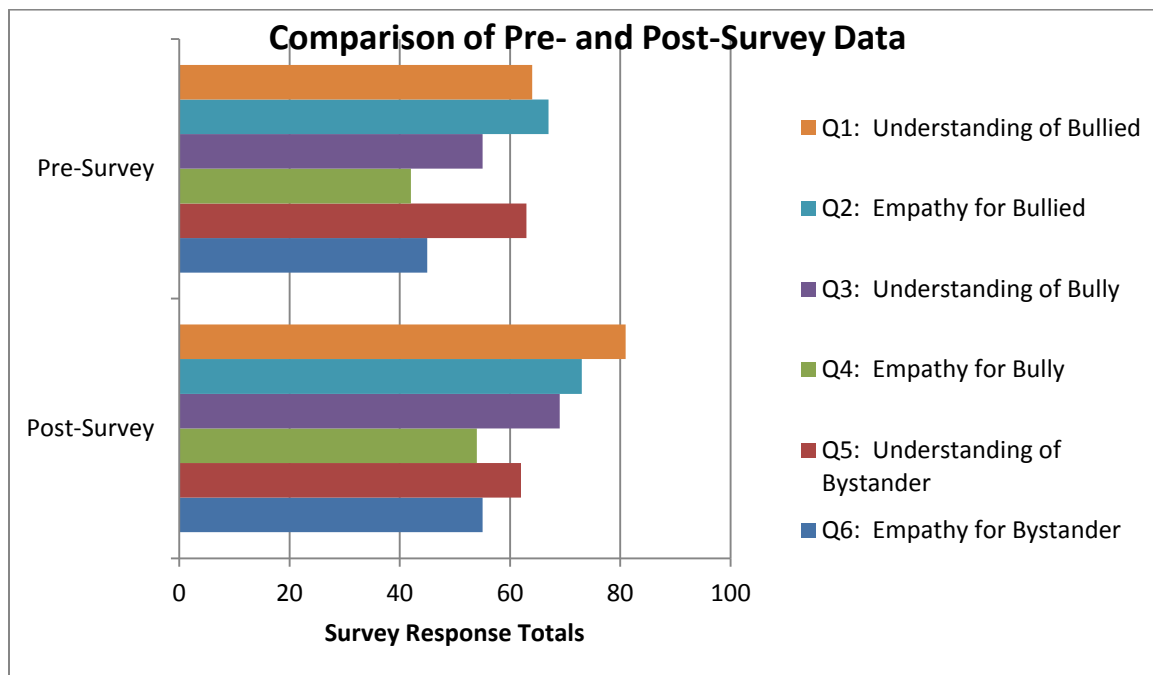


Figure 3. Bar graph showing a comparison of pre-survey and post-survey data

A noticeable increase in levels of understanding of the bullied and the bully can be seen in Figure 3, above. In particular, understanding of the bullied increased by 26.56% and understanding of the bully by 25.45%. Also, empathy for bullies increased by 28.57% and empathy for bystanders increased by 22.22%. Overall, the total for all questions increased by 17.26% or by 58, from scores of 336 to 394.

The results by student also showed an increase in the post-survey data in the majority of cases. Seventeen students out of twenty-two or 77.27% showed an overall increase in their

totals; the largest increase being seven points. These results can be seen in Figure 4, on the following page, which shows the number of students who demonstrated each of the increases or decreases in their Likert scale scores between the first survey and the second survey.

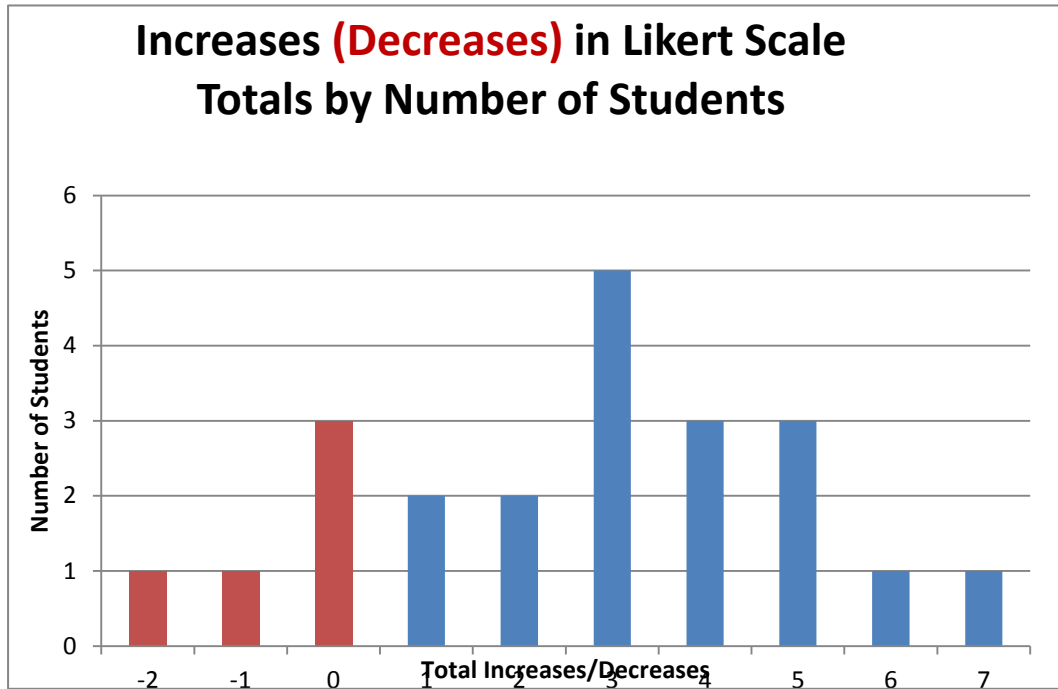


Figure 4. Bar graph showing the number of students and increases (decreases) in overall Likert scale totals for empathy and understanding for the bully, the bullied and the bystander

The results by subject (understanding vs. empathy) for the bully, the bullied and the bystander showed that understanding of the bullied increased by the highest amount but that there was also a notable increase in understanding of and empathy for the bully, and an increase in empathy for both the bystander and the bullied. Understanding of the bystander actually decreased slightly. Figure 5, on the following page, displays these findings in bar graph form.

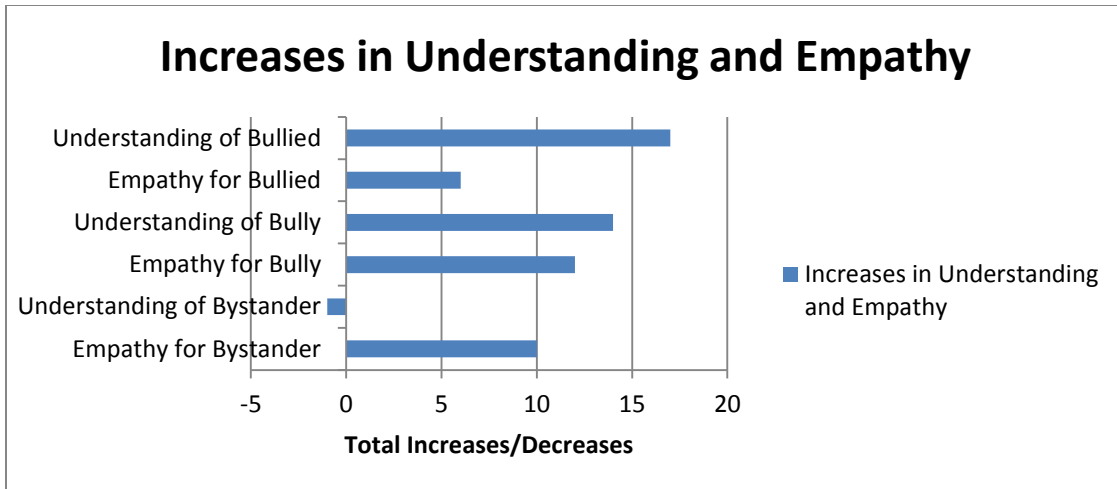


Figure 5. Bar graph showing increases in empathy and understanding for the bully, the bullied and the bystander

Overall, as shown in Figure 6, below, totals for empathy and understanding of the bully increased most notably, from 97 to 123, an increase of 26.80%, followed by empathy and understanding of the bullied which increased slightly less notably from 131 to 154, an increase of 17.56%. Totals for empathy and understanding of the bystander increased only slightly from 108 to 117, an increase of 8.33%.

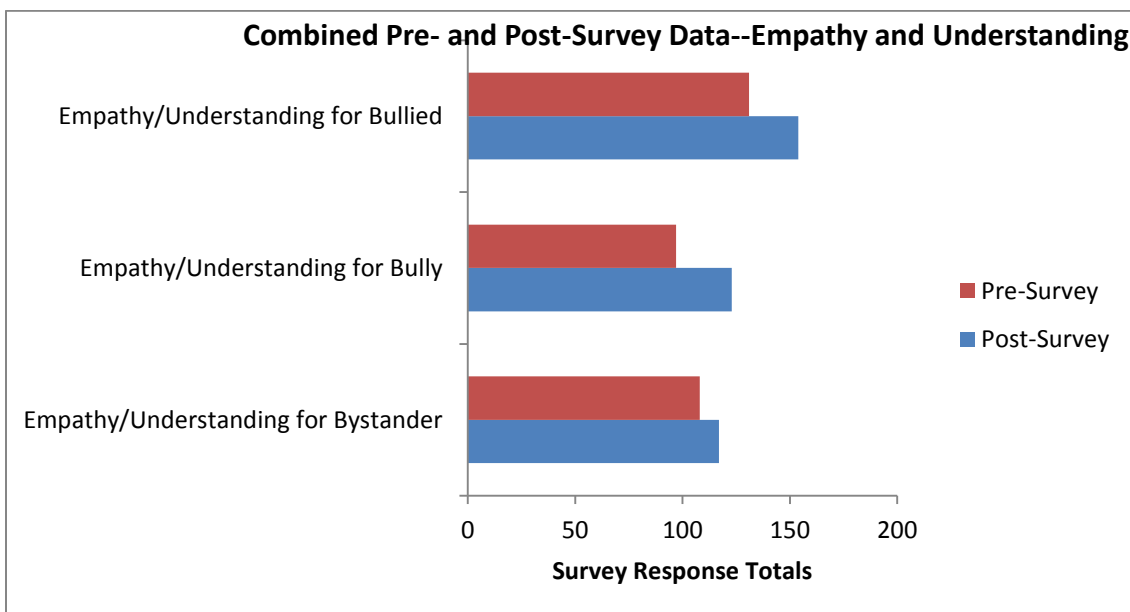


Figure 6. Bar graph showing increases in empathy and understanding for the bully, the bullied and the bystander

Although the data showed an increase in the scores in the vast majority of cases, it is important to note the following decreases in scores from pre-survey data to post-survey data: The totals for Q5 (understanding the feelings of bystanders) decreased from 63 to 62 or 1.61%; three students had scores that remained the same, and two students had scores that decreased from the pre-survey to the post-survey.

5.2. Pre-Survey and Post-Survey Qualitative Data

The open-ended responses of the students to the six pre- and post-survey questions were then analyzed by each component of the research question:

5.2.1. Q1 - Understanding the Feelings of the Bullied

When questioned about their level of understanding of the feelings of victims of bullying, several students elaborated on how the activities in the classroom and specifically the digital story assignment contributed to an increased understanding of the bullied. Some of their comments demonstrated a significant shift in their thinking in terms of why some people are targeted to be bullied and why it is not their fault.

As mentioned, this section of the survey showed the most marked increase in the students' ratings, a jump of 17 points from 64 in the pre-survey to 81 in the post-survey. As well, there was an increase in both the mean and the mode values. The mean increased from 2.91 to 3.68 and the mode increased from 3 to 4.

The following comments taken from the open-ended question responses from the students demonstrated some of their new understandings:

Student #1 stated that he “now knows that people are bullied for a reason.” This student's level of understanding increased from three to four in his pre- and post-survey results.

This increase in conjunction with his comment demonstrated new learning that could be attributed to the digital storytelling project.

In his pre-survey response, Student #5 claimed that he only understands the feelings of the bullied to some extent “because he has not really been in the position of the victim.” In his post-survey response, he stated that he “understands the stress that victims feel when they are faced with these terrible situations.” He also “understands the difficulty they have in talking about their problems.” Student #5’s rating increased from 2 to 4, which was consistent with his written comments.

Student #9 stated in his pre-survey comment that “he can sort of understand but can’t fully understand” the feelings of victims of bullying because he “wasn’t a victim that long.” In his post-survey comment, Student #9 stated the following, which illustrates how impactful the digital stories were in increasing the student’s understanding of the bullied:

Now that I can understand the feeling of victims, it puts everything into a different spectrum. I understand that there are many emotions that the victim feels when bullied. The emotions also affect how the victim acts when they are bullied. That is my new understanding.

Student #9’s level of understanding increased from 2 to 4. Both the Likert scale increase and a change in the student’s perspective confirmed an increase in understanding for the bullied.

Another student, #15, explained that writing the digital story from the viewpoint of the bullied led to a greater understanding of how victims feel:

In my digital story [Story 4: “That One Mute Girl”], I played the role of the victim. I was also the author of our story, and I chose to write it from the victim's point of view, meaning that I had to greatly understand her feelings toward her situation.

This student’s level of understanding increased from 3 to 4.

In his post-survey response Student #19 stated:

I think I understand the victim's feelings extremely well. The digital stories have revealed so much more about victims and their suffering. The digital stories were all very informative and unique, showing a different way as to how the victim ended up being bullied and how they get through it. All the stories were very realistic and they taught me so much about the victim.

As indicated, Student #19 had a number of new understandings that could be attributed to his participation in the project. His score also increased from 3 to 4, which corroborated these findings.

Student #20 stated in his pre-survey response that he had “not had the whole bullying experience,” yet his post-survey response stated that he understands “quite a bit of what they feel.” He understands that “life is hard for them from being bullied at school to their parents fighting at home.” He “cannot relate much to the specific situations that face the victims of bullying” but he “understands their emotions and feelings.” Student #20’s level increased from 3 to 4. The fact that the student made specific reference to parents fighting at home indicated that he was impacted by one or more of the digital stories.

Another student, #21, shared the following, which articulates the student’s new understandings about how victims of bullying feel, and how the digital stories and other assignments in the classroom contributed to these new understandings:

I do understand the feeling of bullying victims because of the following: I have been put into situations where I have felt like a bullying victim, so it is easy to relate to other people that are being bullied. I have read many books and articles on this topic which helped educate me greatly on this subject. I especially enjoy reading bullying-related literature when it comes from the victim's point of view. We have participated in many different activities involving bullying and the feelings of those being bullied. These activities make victims seem more relatable, as if you were in their exact situation. All the digital stories were very helpful to help me learn more about understanding the feelings of these poor victims, as each "author" sees a victim in a different light, and it was interesting to see how everyone else viewed them.

Lastly, Student #22’s level of understanding increased from 2 to 4. She wrote:

I understand now more about how victims of bullying are helpless and it is not their fault. I also know now that there is a variety of reasons that contribute to why people are being

bullied and many of them are just something the bully has made up or pointed out so there is really nothing wrong with victims of bullying.

This demonstrated Student #22's increased understanding of the complexities of bullying and how its victims are chosen, as a result of the work done in this project.

5.2.2. Q2 - Empathy for the Feelings of the Bullied

Overall, student ratings for this question in the pre- and post-surveys increased by six points, which was the least significant of the increases. However, both the mean and the mode increased in the ratings for empathy for the bullied. The mean increased from 3.05 to 3.32 and the mode increased from 3 to 4. Additionally, several individual students' levels of empathy rose as a result of the digital storytelling assignment. For example, Student #5's level of empathy increased from 3 to 4 as a direct result of the stories; his comments specifically mentioned three of the storylines of the digital stories. In his comments he stated that "it doesn't matter if you are overweight, mute or a cupcake with no icing, nobody deserves to be bullied," which clearly demonstrated the connections he has made to the stories.

An increased level of empathy from 3 to 4 was shown by Student #12 as well. This student credited the digital storytelling project for the increase: "I know how they will feel when they get bullied. I understand how they will *feel* by watching the digital stories that we performed in class. The bullied will *feel* alone, scared and wonder why they get bullied."

Although Student #16 had a high degree of empathy before the digital story project, he credited the assignment with consolidating his understandings about bullying. "I now empathize with their feelings because they now make sense to me after the presentations."

Student #19's level of empathy increased from 2 to 3 as a result of the digital storytelling assignment. He shared these insights:

I think the feelings of the victims can really get you, especially in real life and in stories. A lot of people know about bullying, but they've never really

thought as to how much the victim hurts, how much they suffer. The digital stories have all been very sad, and people don't realize that bullying is more than just simple name-calling that can be brushed off... This isn't something that is easily solved, or something that should be taken lightly. This is a serious matter, and now I know that too.

An interesting and surprising finding in this section was that three of the students' levels of empathy for the bullied actually decreased from 3 to 2. As Student #18 explained:

I empathize now less than I did before. Before, I felt very bad for those who were unfortunate enough to be bullied, but I now believe that you can lead yourself into being bullied. Sometimes bullying can be because of reactions. We talked about how reactions can make bullying better or worse. Also, I learned that there is always a solution to the bullying.

Student #9 concurred and commented: "Sometimes the victim becomes the bully and this makes it hard to empathize with the victims."

The fact that these students' levels of awareness of empathy decreased can also be attributed to new understandings gained through the digital storytelling project. Student comments indicate a deeper understanding for how and why bullying occurs. Some students also now believe that bullying can be avoided by taking the appropriate steps and for those who are faced with a bully, there are ways to make it stop. These students may have reached these conclusions due to the positive outcomes of many of the digital stories. Certainly, it appears that Student #9 was impacted by Digital Story 5, "Why Me?" as it deals with an individual who became a bully after experiencing severe abuse in his home life.

5.2.3. Q3 - Understanding the Feelings of the Bully

The second most significant increase, a jump of 14 points in the results between the pre- and post-survey ratings, occurred in this section of the survey. The overall scores increased from 55 to 69, the mean increased from 2.50 to 3.14, and the mode rose from 2 to 3, due to a number of increases in individual student ratings. This in itself is a noteworthy observation, but it is in

the student comments of this section that the full extent of the digital storytelling learning experience was made evident.

For example, Student #1's level of understanding remained at 3 but he articulated his new insights based on the digital stories:

I feel like the bully is just bullied by other people. One story was told from the point of a bully [Story #5: "Why Me?"] and that made it easier to understand the feelings of a bully and what happens in their life.

He went on to explain that bullies are merely "victims of other peoples' bullying" and "because of this, they often have nowhere to turn and consequently, take it out on other people."

Student #5's level of understanding for the feelings of the bully increased from 2 to 4. He commented that he "understands the pain that bullies go through" and how it is "rarely the bully's fault." He then stated that "things like family problems, abuse and insecurities can lead to bullying and that none of these issues actually make the bully a bad person." This can be tied directly to Digital Story 5, "Why Me?" in which the main character became a bully as a result of family problems, abuse and insecurities. This was similar to the comments of Student #7 who also talked about bullies having "problems in their lives."

Another student, #9, showed an increase in his level of understanding as it jumped from 1 to 3. His pre-survey comment stated that he cannot understand why bullies bully and that he sometimes thinks that "they do it for no reason." In contrast, Student #9's post-survey comment stated the following: "Bullies usually have something else going on in their life that makes [them] bully others as a way to release their emotions and pain. This information [the digital stories] helps me understand them more than I did before."

Student #14 and #15's comments indicated similar thinking. Student #14's level of understanding rose from 2 to 3 and Student #15's rose from 2 to 4. Both students noted in their post-survey comments that bullying behaviour is caused by external forces, such as "problems

outside of school” and that they are doing “what they learned at home to do.” Student #14 also now acknowledged that “they don’t know what they are doing is wrong—they want everyone to feel their pain” which contrasted with his pre-survey comment that “the bully is doing this because they want to feel powerful.” Student #15 added, “In some cases the feeling may be worse for the bully than the victim...the bully may be an innocent little boy.”

Greater understanding for the feelings and motivation of bullies was expressed by Student #18 when she commented:

Bullies can experience more pain than victims. In one bullying story [#5: “Why Me?”], the bully was actually an innocent little boy. I believe that nobody is born evil, not even if their parents weren’t very nice. A child goes through a lot to be transformed into a bully. Now, I greatly understand the feelings of the bullies, as I now know that a bully can really just be an innocent person.

The student’s comments contrast with her pre-survey remarks which simply stated: “I think logically that bullying should end and people shouldn’t hurt each other.”

Similarly, a change in attitude towards bullies could be seen through Student #19’s comments:

The digital stories also focused on the aspect of the bully. I think I’ve always known that the bully isn’t someone who just simply bullies, but at the same time I’ve never really felt anything bad for them. The digital stories have put the bully in a position where you wouldn’t blame him/her for bullying. In some cases the bully’s story is even more sad and hopeless than the victim’s case. I’ve known that the bully usually has things happening outside of school, but it actually is extremely sad. I think I’ve learned that much more about bullies after watching the digital stories.”

This student’s level of understanding rose from 2 to 3 and the comment illustrated an increased awareness of what motivates bullies. The student’s pre-survey remarks stated simply that “bullying is when they need a release and it makes them feel better.”

Student #20’s level of understanding also increased substantially from 2 to 4. His comment illustrated that he has gained a deeper understanding of why bullies bully as he now

believes bullies engage in this behaviour due to “family issues or bad experiences,” and that they “do it to make themselves feel better.”

Similarly, Student #21 believed she has a better understanding of bullies as “the digital stories were very explanatory in how bullies feel. This really helped me understand, especially the one that focused on the boy who was bullied at home” [#5: “Why Me?”].

Student #22 also showed a significant increase in her level of understanding as it increased significantly from 2 to 4. She clearly articulated in her comment her new understanding of how bullies come to be bullies: “Now I know bullies are desperate and lost. I know now that they use coward power to fuel themselves and sometimes that involves hurting others to feel superiority. I know mostly they feel broken with using bullying as their tools to fix themselves.”

5.2.4. Q4 - Empathy for the Feelings of the Bully

As a result of the project, several students’ comments also reflected a noticeable increase in empathy for the feelings of bullies. Overall, the mean rose from 1.91 to 2.45, however, the mode remained the same at 2.

Student #5 showed a sharp increase (from 1 to 4) in the level of empathy he feels for bullies and this was reflected in his comments. His pre-survey comment stated that he did not feel any empathy for bullies because “they know they are doing something wrong and they don’t stop.” His post-survey comment showed a clearer understanding of what motivates bullies as he stated: “I think that the bullies want to heal themselves by punishing others.”

Student #6 initially also believed that “bullying is not the right way to deal with things.” He demonstrated much more empathy in his post-survey comment:

Usually the bullies have something going on at home or other places that might make them feel really upset and alone, and they might want to take it out on someone else to relieve their stress and feelings.

Again, this referenced Digital Story 5: “Why Me?” Similarly, Student #10’s pre-survey comment was that few people understand or empathize with bullies; his post-survey response stated: “They probably had a hard life previously or had got the behaviour of their parents. They maybe haven’t had much kindness in their life.”

Although Student #19’s level of empathy remained at 2, his comments indicated that he now has a more empathetic attitude towards bullies:

I think that I understand the feelings of the bully somewhat more now. I can understand what they go through and what they are led to do sometimes. I can even relate to what happens, when you get so mad, you get so hopeless; you turn to who's below you to take your stress and your anger out to them. It's also when parents are having problems; it's when you don't know who to turn to because the people who raised you, who cared for you, who loved you, are in conflict too. I think I can say that I empathize with the feelings of bullies.

This comment was clearly made as a result of watching “Why Me?” as it mirrors the storyline.

Student #21 feels more empathy now that she did when completing the pre-survey and explained:

Bullies seem more in need of help than victims are. They usually have terrible things taking place in their life that they just can't gain control of. Everything I've ever read, heard, or seen about a bully's feelings taught me about how they felt.

Significantly, Student #22’s level of empathy increased from 2 to 4. Her pre-survey comment stated that she had some empathy for bullies. Her post-survey comments showed her new understandings and an increased level of empathy:

I feel and know now that bullies are desperate to try and make others laugh. I can empathize because sometimes people like me say things they don’t mean when trying to make friends and some can be hurtful towards people.

5.2.5. Q5 - Understanding the Feelings of the Bystander

This section and the section that follows both discuss student impressions of the bystander. In these sections, students showed the least amount of change in empathy and

understanding for the bystander, as compared to the bully or the bullied, between their pre-survey and post-survey results. This was confirmed by the very slight changes in the mean, 2.86 to 2.82 for understanding of the bystander, and 2.05 to 2.50 for empathy for the bystander, and no changes in mode between the pre- and post-survey results. These are interesting but not overly surprising results given the fact that none of the students' digital stories focused on the role of the bystander, although there were certainly bystanders in some of the stories. It is also noteworthy that none of the students decided to take the voice of the bystander as the focal point of their story. However, some new understandings of the role of the bystander did come to light in the students' comments.

Student #2 revealed a new level of understanding (from 3 to 4) for the feelings of the bystander. Her initial comment was that she did not understand why bystanders do not come forward and "tell an adult in private what is happening." Her new understanding indicated that she now believes "bystanders have conflicting thoughts."

Another student, #13, demonstrated a marked increase in his level of understanding of the feelings of the bystander (from 1 to 3). Prior to the digital story assignment, he had "never seen a bystander or heard of one" and afterwards he stated that bystanders "do not know how the bully or the victim feels" which confirmed and clarified his new understandings.

The level of understanding remained the same but Student #15's comments demonstrated a new understanding of the role of the bystander: "I feel like the majority of people who are considered "bystanders" don't even know that they're playing this role in the bullying."

Student #19's comments revealed the lack of attention that was given by the students to the role of the bystander in the digital stories: "I think I understand the feelings of a bystander well, but not any better than before. If there's one thing the digital stories didn't focus on, it's the bystanders."

5.2.6. Q6 - Empathy for the Feelings of the Bystander

In terms of their feelings of empathy for the bystander, Student #1 and Student #2 expressed similar thoughts as their levels of empathy each rose 2 points, from 1 to 3 and 2 to 4, respectively. Student #1 expressed in his pre-survey that he was not able to empathize because he had never been in the position of the bystander. As a result of the project, he stated that he felt for them because “they are lost, nervous and confused.”

Student #17 showed an increase in empathy from 2 to 3. Her pre-survey comments indicated little empathy for the bystanders because she “feels like they should step in and help.” Her post-survey comment indicated a new understanding of why bystanders don’t step in— “because they are afraid and don’t wish to become the next victim.” She also stated that they “should try and stand up anyway or find another way to help.” She concluded by saying: “I know I would feel guilty if I watched bullying every day and didn’t do anything about it.”

Interestingly, similar to Students #5 and #21, Student #22 showed a decrease in her level of empathy for the bystander. Her pre-survey comment stated that she feels bystanders are helpless themselves, and that she empathizes with what they feel in their moments of not knowing how to help. Her post-survey comment explained her new feelings about empathy for the bystander:

I don’t empathize with the feeling of bystanders at all now. Now that I have a greater of understanding of the bullies and the bullied I realize that the bystander would do both sides some good by standing up. Bystanders could spare the bullied pain and the bullies guilt but instead out of fear they choose not to.

It was clear by the numerical increases in empathy and understanding from the pre-survey to the post-survey results and the insights provided in the students’ detailed comments that a noticeable, measurable impact was made on the students in terms of the degree of empathy

and understanding they feel for the bully, the bullied and the bystander as a direct result of their participation in the digital story assignment.

5.3. The Digital Stories

5.3.1. Overview

In this section, the twenty-two authors of the stories are described briefly by their personalities, work habits and interests and a synopsis of the nine digital stories is provided in terms of the stories' plot lines and characters in order to give additional context to the study and its results.

5.3.2. Digital Story 1: "Timothy," By Students #9 and #11

5.3.2.1. Student Descriptions

Student #9 is a quiet, reserved and introverted individual in most classroom activities and also in informal peer situations such as recess and school excursions. However, when he is in situations such as formal presentations to the class, he is an articulate, confident and polished speaker. Additionally, Student #9 is an extraordinarily talented artist, in all types of media, a fact that his peers comment on frequently and with much admiration.

Student #11, in contrast, is an outgoing, happy-go-lucky, enthusiastic student who demonstrates excellent leadership in group situations and who expends a great deal of effort in ensuring that tasks are completed to the best of his ability, frequently surpassing the expectations.

5.3.2.2. Description of Story's Text

The digital story was created using a series of hand drawn pencil sketches hand all done by Student #9. An example is shown in Figure 7, below, which depicts the title character sitting alone and reading a book. This represents the character's feeling of isolation from his peers.

There is music playing in the background and the story is narrated by Student #11.



Figure 7. Hand-drawn image of “Timothy”

The story follows a grade seven student named Timothy, described as “never a very social person” who “thought he was better off without other people.” When Timothy tried to begin making friends, he found that others did not want to interact with him, and even refused to work with him in class. Finally, “he realized that he would be alone again,” which made him feel that “he was nobody.” He became depressed and felt very alone. The turning point came when a new student named Andrew came to the school. Andrew began to “hang out with Timothy” and as a result, “Timothy’s reputation began to change,” which led to a return of his confidence. This, in turn, allowed Timothy to focus his attention back on his studies, and his relationship with his parents improved as well. “Being supported gave him more strength to achieve higher.” The story ends with the following advice: “You may not realize that what you are doing may be causing someone pain. You can’t expect them to tell you right away that they

feel left out. If you are starting to notice loneliness in someone, don't ignore it. Everyone needs a friend.”

5.3.3.Digital Story 2: “The Betrayal” By Students #6, #8 and #20

5.3.3.1. Student Descriptions

Student #6 is a creative, bright and very capable student who does not always put forth his best efforts in his haste to finish assignments. He is distractible and can get off-task, particularly when working in a group setting, but clearly enjoys the social aspect of collaborating with peers.

Student #8 is a hard-working and conscientious student who enjoys working in groups and particularly with technology but who does not seek out leadership roles frequently, preferring to remain in the background.

Student #20 is a very quiet, polite individual who struggles with work completion and meeting deadlines. Students often choose to work with him because of his friendly demeanor and his sense of humour. He is also quite a creative and talented artist. The images below, shown in Figure 8, demonstrate his artistic abilities and depict two of the characters in the story.

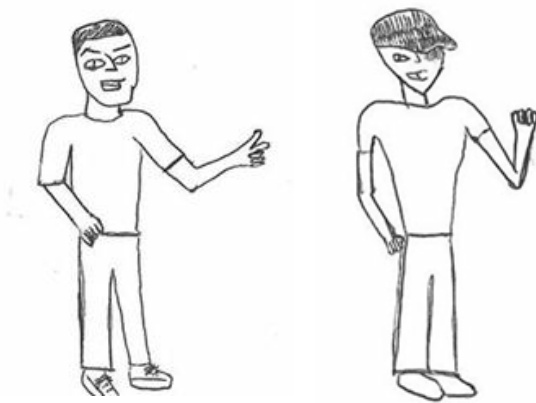


Figure 8. Hand-drawn images of “Cletus” and “José”

5.3.3.2. Description of Story's Text

This digital story was created using five main hand-drawn images; one representing each of the characters in the story. The voices of José, Cletus and the Principal are played by Student #20. The voices of Jerry, Robert and the Narrator are played by Student #8.

This story involves two best friends, José and Jerry who are playing in the park together. A third boy, Cletus arrives and convinces Jerry that José is a loser by saying “Why are you hanging out with that loser? You should be with the cool people like me.” Jerry finally agrees and begins shunning José and starts calling him names, preferring to spend his time with his new friend, Cletus. The verbal bullying by Cletus and Jerry escalates, causing José to wonder “Why can’t people just like me for who I am? Why do they have to judge me based on what someone else says about me?” The verbal abuse worsens and then leads to a physical attack, prompting José to report it to the principal. The principal calls Cletus and Jerry in to reprimand them and while he is waiting, José sees another boy, Robert, who is also waiting to be seen in the office. This is the turning point of the story. José and Robert talk and find that they have much in common; Cletus had stolen Robert’s friend the summer before and then targeted Robert as a bullying victim. The principal has the boys apologize for everything they have done. José and Robert become friends. Just before the end of the story, Jerry approaches José and apologizes for everything, to which José responds, “I forgive you but you have lost my trust, but in the meantime, want to have ice cream?” The narrator then tells us that Cletus stayed as Cletus, “trying to take away peoples’ friends because deep down, he had very little friends.”

5.3.4.Digital Story 3: “Paradise” by Student #22

5.3.4.1. Student Description

Student #22 is an extremely bright, creative and mature student with a great flair for expressive writing. Her written work is always rich with details and personal insights. She worked alone on this project as she was away from school for three weeks on a trip to Hawaii while the other students were working on their stories.

5.3.4.2. Description of Story’s Text

The digital story is comprised of a series of hand-drawn images, some in colour and some in black and white. The music playing softly in the background is a song entitled “Why? (2009, Rascal Flatts, track 11) and the story is narrated by Student #22. The image below, Figure 9, depicts the main character of the story, Patricia, who is ridiculed by her peers because of her weight.

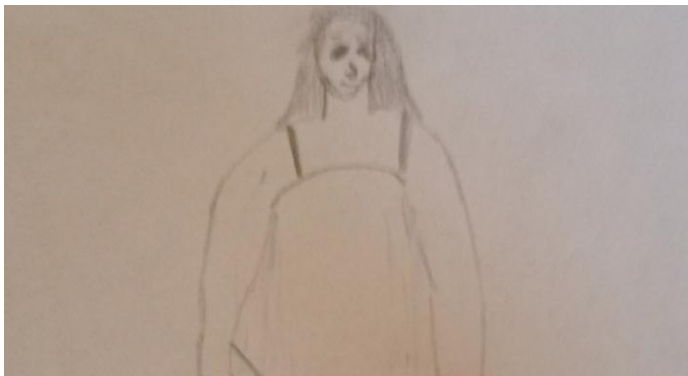


Figure 9. Image of “Patricia”

The story is about a 14 year old girl named Patricia, who despite the fact that she lives in a tropical paradise, experiences relentless bullying because of her weight. As Student #22 wrote: “Fourteen years old. 5’9. One hundred and sixty-seven pounds. Do you think the size two girls

in bikinis and surfer boys with six packs don't notice that?" Patricia is called chubby and a freak by her school mates. As the author described:

Insensitivity exists in paradise...living in paradise is no permanent vacation. For Patricia, paradise is a prison. In a book she once read, it said that 'Life is a journey, not a destination.' But Patricia's journey was filled with terror so it only felt right for her to live to reach one destination: Happiness. But she did not know how far away it was for her.

Patricia's problems worsen when students start a Twitter page about her. She believes she knows who the culprits are because of the way they laugh at her and mock her. "They are the reason why she cries and why she tries to escape the world." Patricia has attempted suicide twice. The bullying escalates to physical attacks until Patricia cannot bear it any longer. The turning point comes when she storms into class, rips off the bandages that hide her scars and reveals all the things that have been done to hurt her. "I hate this. I hate this school. I hate this world. You all ruined it for me." This becomes the catalyst for change for Patricia as her classmates realize the impact they have had with their bullying. The Twitter page is shut down, apologies are made and Patricia is able to get a fresh start. "Suddenly she felt so much closer to her destination" which was to achieve happiness.

5.3.5. Digital Story 4: "That One Mute Girl" by Students #15, #19 and #5

5.3.5.1. Student Descriptions

Student #15 is an extremely articulate and mature student with outstanding oral presentation skills. He is a natural leader who pays great attention to detail in all of his work. Student #19 is quiet, conscientious and works well independently as well as in any group situation. Both of these individuals are very well respected by the other students in the classroom. Student #5 is a highly energetic and spirited boy who can sometimes get carried

by bullies who are ridiculing her and how she feels “surrounded by the pain.”

On her 14th birthday she receives a new notebook from her parents, which she takes to school. A boy in her French class takes it from her and begins running away with it. He runs outside and throws it down the sewer. Later that week, still despondent over the loss of her notebook, she is crying in the bathroom at home and finds some pills. As she is about to take them, her mother walks in, stops her and wraps her arms around her, saying “Things will get better, I promise.”

To get a fresh start, she changes schools. Unfortunately the news of her suicide attempt has spread to the students at her new school and the bullying starts anew. Students are questioned as to how they found out but nobody will admit to anything.

One day, she sees her little brother on his laptop and notices a status that he has posted: “OMG my sis just tried to suicide lol depressed much?” When her mother comes home, her brother admits what he has done and apologizes.

The turning point occurs when the family decides to move to get a fresh start. The main character tells everyone upfront her story of how she was bullied and the kids at her new school are very kind and sympathetic. She begins speaking about her ordeal at schools as she is “encouraged by teachers to do public speaking.” At first she speaks only in her town but “things can go a long way when you put your heart into them.” The story ends with this statement: “An example is me, present day. I’m now a child psychologist, helping kids go through what I had to go through 6 years ago.”

5.3.6.Digital Story 5: “Why Me?” by Students #4 and #3

5.3.6.1. Student Descriptions

Student #4 is a very sensitive, empathetic and diligent student who has a deep appreciation for social justice. He is an articulate and polished speaker and a very strong creative writer. Student #5 is an outgoing, affable and positive student who always willingly participates and shares his opinions in any discussion.

5.3.6.2. Description of Story’s Text

These students chose to present their digital story as spoken word poetry. The images are mostly metaphorical in nature and were taken from internet sources. The poem is read entirely by Student #3 from the standpoint of the character, who is both a victim and a perpetrator of bullying.

The poem begins with the character waking up in the morning in his home, where “the people he so dearly loves and trusts don’t love or trust him back.” He takes refuge at school but it gets “just as bad as home” as he “takes his anger out with strength.” He knows nothing of empathy and is “trapped inside his own body, hoping to find satisfaction in others’ suffering.” He feels like “his potential is locked away like an invisible barrier” and no matter what he does, things only get worse. He feels rejected by society with nowhere to go. Depression takes over as “bullying doesn’t seem like the right thing anymore” and he tries therapy, medication, and illegal drugs. He contemplates suicide, stating that he lives “with monsters of men.” The turning point comes when he flees, “leaving his fear and sadness behind” and moves to a world where he escapes the bad dreams of abuse and rejection. There he wonders, “Why me?” which is depicted in Figure 11, on the following page, and which was the inspiration for the title of the story.

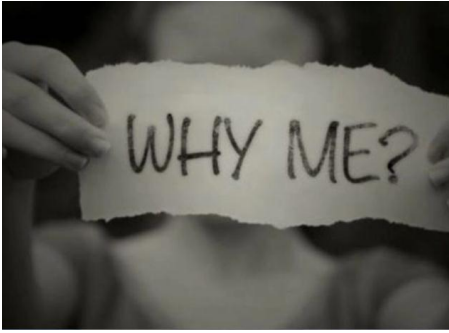


Figure 11. Hand-drawn title image

5.3.7. Digital Story 6: “The Story of PSY” by Students #18 and #21

5.3.7.1. Student Descriptions

Student #18 is a strong and highly disciplined student in all subject areas who is very critical about her own work. She frequently exceeds the expectations of the assignments given. Student #21 is a very kind, empathetic and sensitive student who writes at a very advanced level and demonstrates outstanding critical thinking skills and a great deal of creativity.

5.3.7.2. Description of Story’s Text

The digital story is in the format of a guest being interviewed on a talk show. The girls enlisted a student from the class, Student #4, both of their fathers, as well as the mother and brother of Student #18 to play roles in the story. Student #21 played the role of the narrator, the talk show host and the bully; Student #18 played the role of PSY. The story was filmed by the students using a video camera and is almost 24 minutes in length, which is much longer than any of the other stories, but is in keeping with the type of effort expended and work produced by these two students.

The story is about a sensational YouTube star, PSY, who is invited to speak on a talk show hosted by Arsenio Hall about “his rise to fame and any problems he may have encountered along the way.”

PSY begins his story by telling the audience that he was “the most unpopular kid in the entire grade.” The narrator cuts in to explain that Peter Steven Yen (PSY) was an eccentric boy who suffered from a serious mental disability called Schizoaffective Disorder, which caused hallucinations and mood swings, which was one of the reasons that he had few friends other than his best friend, Melissa.

On the first day of grade seven, as PSY and Melissa walk to school, she informs him that they need to make some new friends. Melissa makes several friends easily but PSY struggles due to his overt enthusiasm for learning and the way he blurts out in class, stating that this is the way he learns. When PSY is told he is disrupting the class, he tells the teacher, “But Mrs., T., you don’t understand. That’s how I learn. Are you dumb?” PSY is sent home, where there is a conflict between him and his parents about his behaviour at school. As he falls asleep, he hears a voice telling him that in order to succeed in life, he must follow his heart.

The next day at school, Melissa continues to shun PSY and the other students follow suit. PSY disrupts the class again and gets into another argument with the teacher. He wants to demonstrate his new “special talent” to the class but the teacher wants him to get back to work. PSY insists and starts dancing a special dance that he created. He is sent home again where his parents tell him to stop dancing and to focus on his studies.

The bullying at school continues and PSY finds a web page that students started to post negative comments about him. There is also video of him dancing with the caption “Look below to watch video of this retard dancing.”

This leads to PSY becoming depressed and his wanting to “stop life.” He feels that everyone at school and home hates him.

The turning point comes when PSY decides that “everybody’s wrong. Nobody knows me. I’m better than all of them. And I’ll prove it to them. I’ll become the best dancer and

everyone will be jealous when I'm rich and famous. But I'll need to work on my song lyrics first.”

PSY goes to school the next day and insists on performing for the class. The teacher and students are impressed and start to accept PSY, complimenting his dancing and singing. Figure 12, shown below, depicts the turning point of the story.

The scene returns to the talk show where Arsenio Hall wraps up the interview by saying that PSY's story showed “many examples of courage, perseverance, kindness and integrity.”



Figure 12. Turning point for the main character

5.3.8.Digital Story 7: “Paul” by Students #14, #16 and #13

5.3.8.1. Student Descriptions

Student #14 is an introverted, hard-working student who excels in mathematics but does not enjoy writing. He has some difficulty in social and cooperative learning settings as he can be inflexible at times. Student #16 is a cheerful and polite student who struggles academically, particularly in mathematics and writing, but enjoys reading and participating in oral discussions.

Student #13 is also not a strong writer but is elaborative verbally and an excellent presenter. He is new to the school and has had some difficulties in the past with bullying.

5.3.8.2. Description of Story's Text

The story is a narrative of a student named Paul. All three of the boys participate in the telling of the story, with the role of Paul being read by Student #13, the role of Jim being read by Student #16 and the story being narrated by Student #14. Quiet instrumental music plays in the background. The images are taken from internet sources as well as some hand-drawn ones created by the students to indicate scene changes.

The story of Paul begins with Paul going to school. In the grade above him, there is a student named Jim who is very popular and has many friends. Jim decides to target Paul by bullying him physically at every opportunity, and by trying to get him into trouble. He threatens Paul by saying he will “never be cool if he tells on him.” Paul cannot bear to come to school anymore. Figure 13, below, depicts Paul’s unhappiness and frustration. His parents move and he attends a new school. After two months the bullying begins again. But at the new school, Paul has a friend who stands up for him against the bully and then two more students join his friend. This is the turning point for Paul. Paul now has several friends. He is asked to tell his story in the school and then to present to other schools. “He agrees and helps raise awareness of bullying.”



Figure 13. Image of “Paul”

5.3.9.Digital Story 8: “Mitchell’s Story” by Students #12, #10 and #1

5.3.9.1. Student Descriptions

Student #12 is a confident, mature and responsible student who says she despises reading but is quite a strong writer. Student #10 is very capable but does not always put forth a great deal of effort, particularly when it comes to writing. He is a voracious reader and strong math student but struggles socially. Student #1 is a well-rounded, enthusiastic, social and diligent student who can be placed in any group situation and make it work.

5.3.9.2. Description of Story’s Text

The story uses a combination of photographs and internet sources. Student #12 is the narrator; Students #10 and #1 play the roles of the Principal and Mitchell, respectively. The music used was “Sad” (2012, Maroon Five, track 9) and “Where We Left Off” (2012, Hayes, track 9).

The story follows Mitchell, age five, who is starting school. He is nervous about meeting new people but meets Selena on the first day and feels relieved to have a friend. Later that day, Mitchell is asked to read aloud and stumbles on his words, prompting the other students to laugh at him and say “Ha Ha, Mitchell can’t read.” The teacher and parents decide that Mitchell will have an Educational Assistant working with him at school to help him with his reading. The next day, when Mitchell arrives at school, the kids taunt him and say “Hey, it’s stupid!” Selena defends him but the kids continue to belittle Mitchell. This increases when they find out that Mitchell has an E.A. working with him. At home, Mitchell wonders, “Why does everyone pick on me? I know I am different but I thought that just made me special. It would be so boring if everyone was the same so why do they think it’s okay to pick on me? I am not going to let this happen anymore!” The image of Mitchell reflecting on his situation is depicted in Figure 14.



Figure 14. Image of “Mitchell” reflecting on his situation

This is the turning point in the story. Mitchell confides in his mother, who takes it up with the principal. The principal addresses the class and Mitchell interjects: “Just because I am different doesn’t mean you have a right to pick on me. I might be a bit slower than everyone else but it’s good to be different. If you don’t appreciate that then that’s your problem!” The students consider this then realize they were wrong and apologize to Mitchell.

5.3.10. Digital Story 9: “The Cupcake and the Muffin” by Students #17, #2 and #7

5.3.10.1. Student Descriptions

Student #17 is a very serious, mature and independent student who speaks her mind clearly and unapologetically. Student #2 is a very kind, empathetic and conscientious student who is very eager to please. Student #7 has similar characteristics to Student #2 and they are very good friends. All three girls have a strong work ethic and enjoy using their creativity in school projects, as evidenced by their digital story.

5.3.10.2. Description of Story's Text

The story is created using internet images of various baked goods in a bakery. The music begins with an instrumental piece and at the climax of the story switches to “Mr. Lonely” (1962, Vinton, track 4). The pastries are given human attributes and are able to speak. The three cupcakes feel that they are superior to the muffin and the chocolate cupcake says, “You realize that muffins are just ugly cupcakes, right?” This image is depicted in Figure 15, below.

The muffin tries hard to fit in but the cupcakes continue to insult her. “You know that if anyone is going to come by, they’re going to buy us, not you! Cupcakes are pretty and sweet. You’re not.” Eventually, a girl and her mother come into the bakery and the girl chooses the muffin over the cupcakes. This is the turning point of the story. The “cake” then tells the cupcakes, “Muffins aren’t just ugly cupcakes, they’re desserts. Everyone deserves to be treated equally and be loved.” The cupcakes realize then that they should have been nicer to Muffin and that “cupcakes and muffins are all equally delicious.”

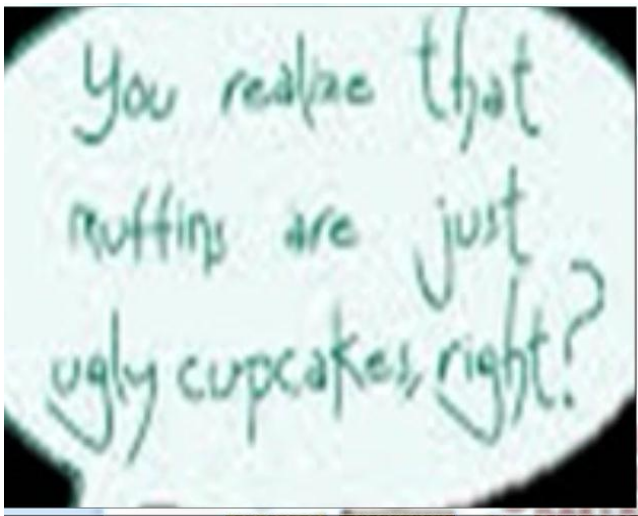


Figure 15. Bullying message image

5.4. Analysis of Digital Stories

Although the nine digital stories were diverse in terms of their plot lines, characters and digital elements, there are some commonalities that emerged during the presentations and in the ensuing deconstruction and class discussions. Table 1, which appears on the following page, provides an overview of the elements of each of the nine stories in order to facilitate comparison and contrast of the various aspects of the stories:

Table 1: Overview of Elements of Digital Stories

	Story 1	Story 2	Story 3	Story 4	Story 5	Story 6	Story 7	Story 8	Story 9
Title	Timothy	The Betrayal	Paradise	That One Mute Girl	Why Me?	The Story of PSY	Paul	Mitchell's Story	The Cupcake and the Muffin
Students	9,11	6,8,20	22	5,15,19	3,4	18,21	13,14,16	1,10,12	2,7,17
Point of View	Bullied	Bullied	Bullied	Bullied	Bully	Bullied	Bullied	Bullied	Bullied
Images	Hand-drawn	Hand-drawn	Hand-drawn	Internet Hand-drawn	Internet	Filmed	Internet Hand-drawn	Filmed	Internet
Music	Piano	None	Lyrics and Music	Lyrics and Music	Lyrics and Music	Lyrics and Music	Piano	Lyrics and Music	Instrumental, Lyrics and Music
Voices	Narrated	Narrated and Characters speak	Narrated	Narrated by main character	Narrated	Narrated and Characters speak	Narrated and Characters speak	Narrated and Characters speak	Narrated and Characters speak
Setting	School and Home	School	School and Home	School and Home	School and Home	School and Home	School and Home	School and Home	School and Bakery
Type of Bullying	Relational- (Exclusion)	Verbal, Relational- (Exclusion) & Physical	Verbal, Relational- (Exclusion) & Cyber	Verbal & Physical- (Destruction of Property)	Verbal & Physical	Verbal, Relational- (Exclusion) & Cyber	Verbal & Physical- (Destruction of Property)	Verbal	Verbal & Relational- (Exclusion)
Reason for Targeting	Is known as a loner	None	Physical Traits	Voicing Unpopular Opinion/ Muteness	Bullied at Home	Unusual Behaviour/ Mental Illness	None	Learning Disability	Physical Traits
Home Situation	Parents in conflict with one another and with the main character	N/A	Single parent; financial struggles and lack of support	Family conflicts	Abuse of main character	Conflict with parents and lack of understanding	Lack of support from parents	Supportive	N/A
Resolution	Makes a new friend and is accepted by peers	Bullying stops and makes a new friend	Defends herself and bullying stops	Bullying stops, becomes advocate and child psychologist as an adult	Escapes the bullying cycle	Bullying stops and becomes accepted by peers	New friends stand up to bully and bullying stops; becomes an advocate	Stands up for himself and bullying stops	Bullies realize they are wrong and bullying stops
Audience Feedback	Relatable; characters seemed real; music helped express emotion	Average kid was very connectable; friends leaving to make other friends is very common and relatable	Felt empathy and emotion for the character; bullies are often looking for a reaction so maybe Patricia's reaction is the part of the reason why she was targeted by the bullies	More emotion/ empathy is felt when the subject has a disability	Very real and powerful because it is told from the viewpoint of the bully	Realistic because it is filmed mostly at school which is where most bullying occurs	Shows how anyone can be bullied but unrealistic in terms of reactions of teacher (does not believe him) and parents (decide to move away)	Could relate to first day of school and feeling awkward; realistic as people with disabilities often get picked on for being different	Music made the story more emotional

Despite the fact that the students had the choice of writing their stories from the viewpoint of the bully, the bullied or the bystander, eight of the nine stories were told from the viewpoint of the bullied, and one from the viewpoint of the bully. Although bystanders were incorporated into the majority of the storylines, none of the students chose to tell the story from the viewpoint of the bystander. This is consistent with the data from the pre- and post-surveys, which showed that the smallest increase in empathy and understanding occurred for the bystander. Even more noteworthy was the fact that the one story that was told from the viewpoint of the bully, “Why Me?” was the one that elicited the most discussion responses and the greatest pre- and post-survey increases in empathy and understanding. Writing from the viewpoint of the bullied was also significantly impactful as it appeared to have led to a marked increase in empathy and understanding in the pre- and post-survey data as well.

When choosing the multimodal elements for their stories, five of the students chose to incorporate their own original hand-drawn images, while two groups chose to use pre-existing images from the internet and two other groups elected to film their stories or embed photographs taken for the story. When asked to explain their choices, the students felt that the internet images did not suit their needs, in many cases, as they were looking for specific images to convey certain specific thoughts and emotions in the stories. They also felt that hand-drawn images improved the continuity and consistency in their work. The students who chose to use photographs or to film their stories stated that this personalized their stories to a greater extent than what they could have achieved with internet images.

With the exception of one group, all of the groups embedded music into their stories, with the majority choosing to include popular songs with words and music instead of the instrumental music selected by two groups. The one group who did not include music recognized that the lack of music reduced the effectiveness of their story; one group member

stated that they wanted to add music but were unsure how to embed it into their story using the Photo Story software. Almost universally, the students commented that the use of music contributed to the mood of their stories. The two groups who chose instrumental music felt that it helped to create the desired mood for their stories but was subtle enough to not compete with the dialogue, which they felt was the focal point of their stories. The groups who chose music that contained lyrics described spending a considerable amount of time in selecting their music to ensure that it conveyed the emotions they were searching for, either through the name of the song, the lyrics, the melody, or all three.

Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, all of the groups included the school as at least a partial setting for their stories; the home environment was represented in seven of the nine stories as well. As the assignment was completely open-ended, writing about a school or home bullying episode was not a requirement. In their deconstruction of the stories, several of the students mentioned that bullying is a common event at schools and that it often spills over into the person's homelife.

With respect to the type of bullying portrayed in the story, verbal bullying was present in all of the stories, followed by relational as the second most prevalent type of bullying, which could be seen in five of the nine stories. Physical bullying was evident in four of the stories and cyberbullying was referred to in two of the stories. It is perhaps surprising that there was a lack of emphasis on cyberbullying, since it is such a pervasive and prevalent form of bullying in the lives of today's adolescents. The two groups that did incorporate cyberbullying did so using social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram.

In terms of the targets of the bullying, several of the stories focused on the traditional notions of a more powerful and/or popular student at school who chooses to bully someone who is considered a "loser," such as in the case of Digital Story 2, "The Betrayal," and in the case of

Digital Story 7, “Paul.” Similarly, Digital Story 3, “Paradise,” Digital Story 4, “That One Mute Girl,” Digital Story 6, “The Story of PSY,” Digital Story 8, “Mitchell’s Story” and Digital Story 9, “The Cupcake and the Muffin” all contained characters who were ostracized by their peers for being different. In “Paradise,” the character was bullied because of her weight. In “That One Mute Girl,” the title character was attacked for expressing an unpopular opinion about school. “PSY” was ridiculed for his dancing. Mitchell became a target of bullying because he was not able to read as well as the other children. “Muffin” was disparaged for not being as attractive as the “Cupcakes.” Two of the new understandings that emerged in the students’ comments as a result of the digital stories were that people are often bullied for their differences and somewhat paradoxically, anyone can be bullied, even “ordinary” people who are “just like everyone else.”

The home situations in many of the stories depicted an environment of conflict, lack of emotional support or outright abuse, as was the case in “Why Me?”, the only story which was told from the point of view of the bully. This story had a noticeable impact on the students, which was evident in their post-survey comments, several of which attributed their new understandings of and empathy for the bully to this digital story. Several of the students commented on the fact that the bully feels alone, with nobody to turn to, and that an adverse home situation is a significant contributing factor of what turns the bullied into bullies.

It was interesting that all nine of the stories ended with a positive resolution to the bullying situation; either the bullying stopped and new friendships were established, as was the case in “Timothy,” “The Betrayal,” “The Story of PSY,” and “Paul,” or the bullying stopped and the bullied became advocates for anti-bullying as in “That One Mute Girl” and “Paul.” In “Paradise” and “Mitchell’s Story,” the bullied took a stand, advocated for themselves and as a result, the bullying stopped. As one of the goals of the research was to increase empathy and understanding for the bully, the bullied and the bystander, it is hoped that the positive resolution

to the stories implies that the students feel somewhat more empowered and educated about bullying, its effects and how it can be prevented or resolved.

In terms of audience feedback on the stories, several of the stories were what the students referred to as “relatable,” “connectable” or “realistic.” Another recurrent response was that when the bullied has a disability, the audience feels more empathetic. These findings are consistent with the pre- and post-survey results as well as the actual stories such as “The Story of PSY” and “That One Mute Girl,” which confirm that the students recognize that people are bullied for a variety of reasons, including their physical and mental disabilities.

5.5. Digital Stories Case Studies

As stated, two of the nine digital stories, Digital Story 3, “Paradise” and Digital Story 5, “Why Me?” were selected for deeper examination as case studies. Case Study One, entitled “Paradise” and written by Student #22 was chosen due to the noteworthy increases in empathy and understanding that occurred in this student’s pre- and post-surveys as well as the creativity and authentic depiction of a target of bullying depicted in the student’s digital story. Case Study Two, called “Why Me?” was selected due to its impactful words and images and because it was the only story of the nine that was written from the point of view of the bully.

5.5.1. Case Study One: “Paradise”

The author of “Paradise” is a student whose post-survey comments confirm that she was deeply impacted by the digital story project. This can be seen in the significant increases in her level of both understanding and empathy for the victims of bullying as well as for bullies. In her post-survey comments about her understanding of the feelings of the victims of bullying she stated that she now has a better understanding of the helplessness of the bullied

and how it is not their fault. She went on to state that there are a variety of contributing factors to why individuals are bullied—there is “really nothing wrong with victims of bullying.”

In terms of the bully, Student #22 stated the following: “Now I know bullies are desperate and lost. I know now that they use ‘coward power’ to fuel themselves and sometimes that involves hurting others to feel superiority. I know mostly they feel broken with using bullying as their tools to fix themselves.” The use of the term ‘coward power’ came from a guest speaker who came to the classroom and related her experiences as a bully when she was an adolescent. The use of the term indicates that the speaker made an impact on the student, and that the expression resonated with her.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Student #22 feels less empathy and understanding for the bystander as a result of working on this project. She believes that now that she has a greater understanding of the bullies and the bullied, she realizes that “the bystander would do both sides some good by standing up. Bystanders could spare the bullied pain and the bullies guilt but instead out of fear they choose not to.” This attitude is perhaps reflected in the fact that the bystanders in her story did little to impact the outcome for the main character.

5.5.1.1. Digital Components

In her explanation of her digital story, Student #22 discussed some of the digital effects that she chose and her rationale for choosing them. The images in the story are drawings that Student #22 created specifically for this project. She chose to draw some things in colour as she stated that it “represents the happiness of paradise.” The main character, Patricia, however, is drawn in black and white as it depicts the darkness of her mood, the fact that “her journey was sad and not exactly at a happy time in her life.” The colour grey which is also used in scenes with Patricia represents the “dreariness of what she’s experiencing.” Student #22 chose to use

original drawings as she felt that they enabled her to personalize her story to a greater degree. Also, she found that it was difficult to find images that fit exactly into her character's situation.

The music Student #22 selected was a song called "Why?" (2009, Rascal Flatts, track 11) which she chose because of its melody, lyrics and title. The title fit as it made her think of the character and wonder, "Why would you do this, Patricia?" The melody was soft and slow, which Student #22 felt suited the mood of the story. She talked about the lyrics being appropriate because although "the lyrics fit into a different situation, he's talking to a girl who's going through a rough time."

The title "Big Girl on a Small Island" was selected as Student #22 reflected back on some work done in the classroom: "We've been talking about how media affects the weight of people. At the beach you see super skinny people in bikinis. I drew Patricia in a one-piece as she is trying to cover herself up. She is not self-confident because of her weight." This is depicted in Figure 16, below, which shows Patricia in a one-piece bathing suit.



Figure 16. Image of "Patricia" in one-piece bathing suit

The quote “Life is a journey, not a destination,” by Ralph Waldo Emerson was chosen by the student to depict the theme of the story. For Patricia, “happiness is her destination,” and indeed, at the end of the story, the last lines are “Suddenly she felt so much closer to her destination.” Along the way, there were many obstacles in Patricia’s path, so many bullies like Beth and Tara and other school mates and Patricia “didn’t know how far away happiness was. Months? Days? Miles?”

The deliberate choices that the student made in terms of colour, hand-drawn images and music demonstrate her understanding of how dark the existence can be for victims of bullying, and her empathy for Patricia during the course of her difficult and uncertain journey towards a life free from bullying.

5.5.1.2. Images

Student #22 provided detailed explanations of some of the moving and powerful images she created in her story. The eye image (see Figure 17) was created as it depicts “waves of tears passing over her [Patricia]. Each break in the waves represents something else that someone did to her.” Examples the student gave were a Tweet, a shove in the hallway and being abandoned. This represents “the waves of her tears.”

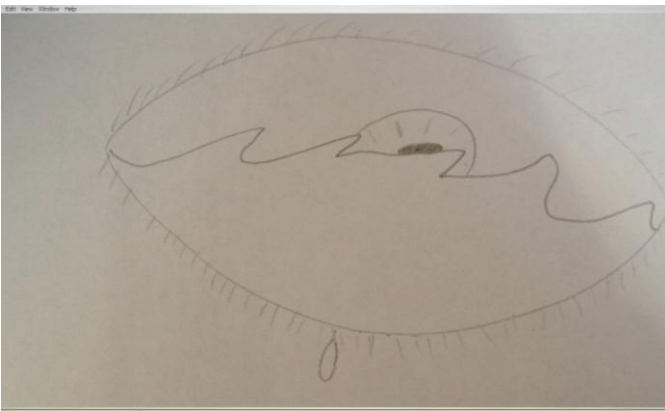


Figure 17. Image of “Waves of Tears”

The Twitter image “Patricia Grace @FatPatriciaLOL, Figure 18, below, was created as an actual Twitter account (and subsequently deleted) as the student felt that a drawing of the image would not really “capture the essence of Tweeting.”



Figure 18. Image of Twitter feed directed at “Patricia”

The Bandaid image, Figure 19, represents Patricia’s “literal and metaphorical scars.” She has been scarred by her past and the effects of the bullying. She is bullied because of her weight and also because she is now declared the “emo girl” due to her suicide attempts. She is trying to cover her scars and move forward, but “every time she tries to take a step, she’s pulled back.”

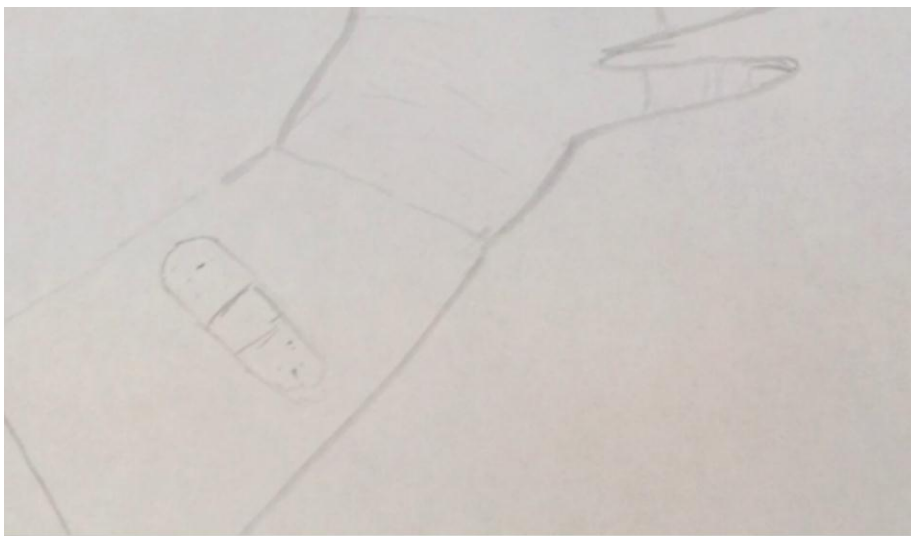


Figure 19. Bandaid image

The student indicated that she purposely chose the Emerson quote as an example of a book that the character would read. The student made the font larger than the rest of the writing “to show how powerful it could be.” The quote relates to Patricia’s journey, which is so “filled with terror it only felt right to live with one destination—happiness.”

The hand-drawn map depicting Patricia’s life journey (see Figure 20 on the following page) is complex and contains a number of significant and meaningful elements. As the author states, “Here I have all of the hurtful things that she has experienced. If it has an exclamation mark after it, it’s what people have said to her.”

According to Student #22, things get worse for the character as the path is followed. It starts with a cloud as it depicts “the darkness of her sad journey.” Then there are lies and rumours and “you start to notice tears and whispers overheard. And finally she’s hurt badly because the name calling starts.”

Student #22 stated that she put the tree down as it is “kind of like an obstacle in her path. That’s where the bad things kind of started there.” At this point in the story, the name calling worsened, she started being called “emo.” She’s being screamed at and “kids are starting to hate her.” The situation worsens and “you see torture and things like that.”

The picture of Patricia is on the right hand side of the drawing, and she is drawn wearing a ball and chain because she is trapped. The rest of the path is blank “because we don’t know what’s going to happen next.”

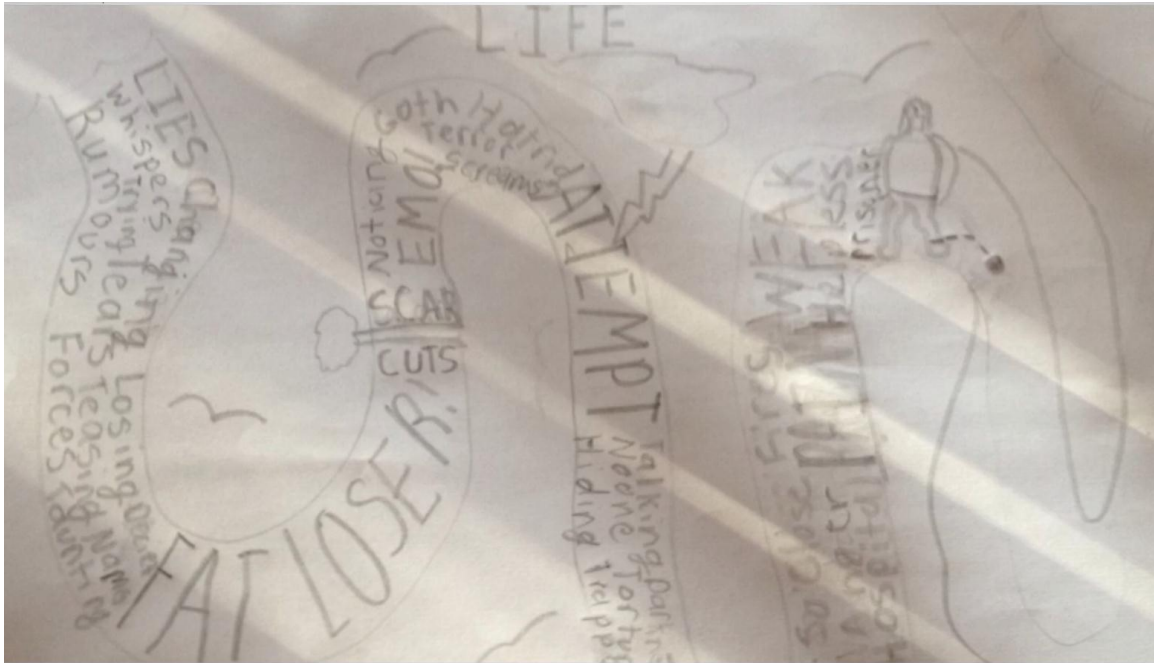


Figure 20. Image of the path of “Patricia’s” life

In the following image, Figure 21, Patricia is holding the bandaid in her hand because “she is revealing her scars of what she has done.” She’s “letting loose and telling the truth. This is kind of her breaking point. She kind of snaps.” This is the turning point of the story as Patricia “is sick of what these people were doing to her and she just got really angry. It opened her up.”



Figure 21. Image of Patricia revealing her true thoughts

The next image, Figure 22, depicts the resolution of the story, where the perpetrators of the bullying apologize on Twitter for their actions: “Below you can see the hurtful Tweet and above you can see that it is getting better for her.”



Figure 22. Image of Twitter feed apology to “Patricia”

The last image, Figure 23, depicts Patricia’s destination, which is happiness. The story concludes with the words “suddenly she felt so much closer to her destination” which offers a message of hope that there can be a positive resolution to the devastating effects of bullying.

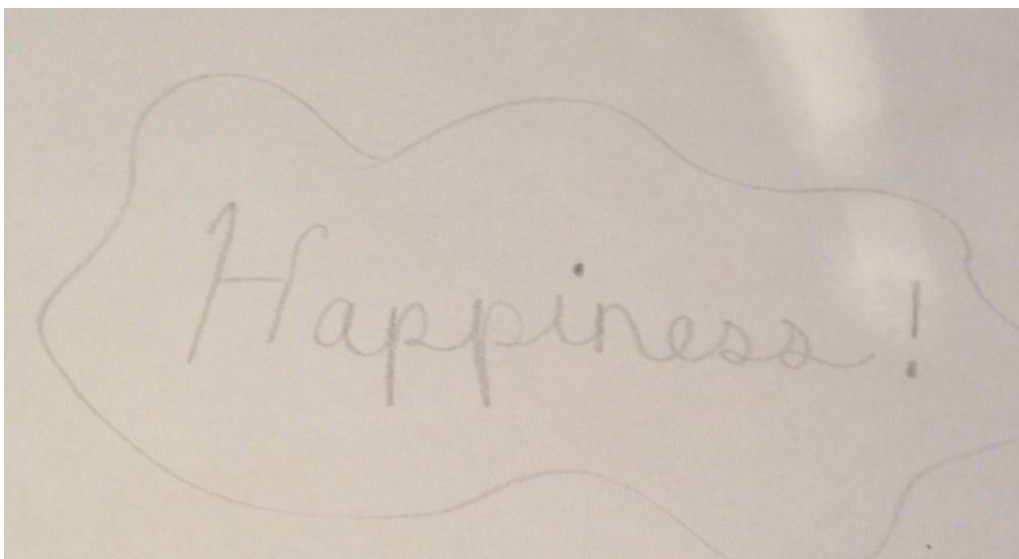


Figure 23. Image depicting “Patricia” reaching her destination: Happiness

5.5.2. Case Study Two: “Why Me?”

The boys started their presentation by stating that their story was written as spoken word poetry. As Student #4 said, they believe that poetry can often contain “a lot more emotion and can express feelings a lot more than a narrative with characters and dialogue.” They told the audience that the story could be interpreted in different ways, and that the students would have an opportunity to share their interpretations during the class discussion.

Overall, Students #3 and #4 did not show a numerical increase in their levels of understanding of and empathy for the bully, the bullied and the bystander, however their comments on the survey indicated an increased level of empathy and understanding particularly for the bullied and the bully. As Student #3 wrote: “The class activities made me really think about how it must feel [to be bullied]. It has made me really sad and a little scared I might be bullied.” And “I [now] have some idea [about how bullies feel] due to the amount of times we talked about bullying.”

Student #4’s comments indicated that he might have been influenced by the “Paradise” digital story as he wrote: “No matter what the reason, being short or fat nobody should be that uncertain about themselves, or be sad because of other people's words.” He showed empathy for bullies as he stated: “I do know that often it is the only thing that they have learned, maybe they are rejected themselves, or are abused at home. Some people can be cruel for no reason, but often there is a story behind their emotions.”

Student #4 showed that he has a good understanding of the underlying causes of bullying: “I empathize with the feeling of bullies a lot, because it is not fair that they have been raised that way, or that other people are cruel enough to them to make them commit the actions that they do commit. I often think about what must be going on inside them or at home to make them act this

way.” The story was told from the voice of the bully because they believed that the rest of the class was going to write their stories from the point of view of the victim.

Student #4 also brought his own perspective and life experience to the project as he stated: “Lots of people don’t realize what happens to people who are bullies. I know it because my mom works with youth. She’s a social worker. A lot of people don’t know it. They think people are just nasty for no reason. We’re just showing you the logic behind what happens.”

Student #3 explained that he was influenced by the examples the students were shown of other digital stories surrounding bullying such as “To This Day” a popular YouTube video that chronicles the bullying experiences of Shane Koyczan (Koyczan, 2013) as he stated, “We tried to make it really sad because the examples we saw were all really sad. If it’s more sad you feel it for a lot more. We tried to make our video like that so people could actually feel his pain.”

The boys chose to make the story about the bully and how the people at the bully’s school “mentally abused” him. From the third stanza: “School is his refuge from his parents but it gets just as bad as home.” They talked about the fact that he is not accepted by his family, as shown by the opening stanza: “When we wakes up in the morning he goes into battle” and in the second stanza, “Going downstairs is the scariest part of the day for him because the people he so dearly loves and trusts don’t love or trust him back.” The character “takes his anger out on others because that is what has happened to him.” As Student #4 stated, “If you go home and your parents do nothing but swear at you, you’re naturally going to swear when you go other places, because it’s the only thing you’ve ever learned.” The bully in the story was abused at home and so he felt the need to take out his anger on other people. As stated in the fourth stanza, “Trying to make people feel his pain, he feels like a freak on a leash.”

Student #3 continued to explain that the bully began to feel badly about himself and started taking drugs to make himself feel better but that did not work so he ended up running

away. This was shown in the story by the lines: “He tries therapy, anti-depressants, everything he can, nothing can cure the pain he feels inside.”

As Student #4 indicated in his comments, the story is very dark at times and they “came pretty close to the line of suicide” such as in the eleventh stanza: “Suicide becomes an option. Depression and drugs is not. Monsters of men, he thinks, I live with monsters of men. He cannot bear to live on any more.” He explained that they wanted to do something they felt was realistic and “not a story where somebody took away your soccer ball.”

Student #3 concurred and commented: “We thought it was realistic because if you’ve been bullied like the girl who switched to three different schools and still got bullied at each one, you start to think it’s impossible to get away from it. When you have that thought, it’s definitely hard to move on with your life--when you know something is never going to stop.” This was shown in the story by the lines, “but he knows that no matter what, it will always come pounding on him with an invisible fist.”

5.5.2.1. Digital Components

The music for the digital story was chosen by scrolling through an iPod until the students found what they believed to be the most depressing, sad-sounding songs. They then decided on “Paradise Circus” by Massive Attack (2011, Del Naja, track 2) because both the soundtrack and the lyrics were sad. The song is about losing somebody that you love, which they found to be appropriate for the story.

The images were all taken from the internet and were carefully selected to represent the emotions that Students #3 and #4 wanted to evoke in their audience.

The audio/music and images were put together in such a way that “it’s like words are speaking to you while you have the image in your head.” By not using literal images, the boys felt that it was easier for their audience to make their own connections to the story. They

conclude their commentary with this thought: “We wanted to make it as realistic as possible. We didn’t want to sugar-coat it and have the bullies go up to the kid and say sorry and live happily ever after. Because this is what happened.”

The deliberate choices the students made in terms of music and internet images demonstrated their understanding of how unhappy the life of the bully must be and their empathy for how their character must feel.

5.5.2.2. Images

Students #3 and #4 decided early in the project to use images in their digital story that were what they termed “symbolistic” (i.e. metaphorical or symbolic) and “not like Tommy’s at the playground and you draw a picture of Tommy and a playground” as they wanted to combine the music, spoken words and images to create different impressions and different interpretations that were unique and distinct for each member of the audience, according to their own schema and experiences. As Student #3 stated, “It’s like reading a book—some people interpret it differently. That’s why the book is always better than the movie. The book you always interpret the way you should think.” Student #4 added to this by providing an example, as shown in Figure 24: “When he’s taking out his anger, we didn’t have a picture of someone angry, we had what some people would say their emotions look like painted” (See Figure 24).



Figure 24. Image of character’s emotional state

The image below, Figure 25, is slightly more literal as it represented the fear the character had of his parents in the second stanza of the poem: “Going downstairs from his room is the scariest part of the day for him.”



Figure 25. Image of character’s fear of parents

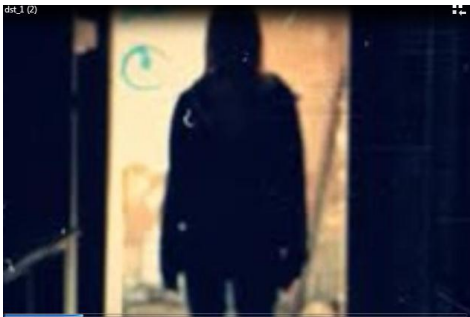


Figure 26. Image of silhouette

The silhouette image as shown in Figure 26, above, was chosen as Student #4 stated, “because you can’t really see the person isolated and locked up inside. You can see the silhouette but that doesn’t mean anything. You don’t really know what’s inside.”

The lock image (Figure 27, on the following page) represented the character’s potential which is “locked away like an invisible barrier.” Student #3 added that the character feels locked up and this causes him to make other people feel locked up as well.



Figure 27. Image of character’s “locked-up” potential

Figure 28, below, was chosen for its “symbolistic” value as well. It depicts the character’s realization and regret for what the character has done.



Figure 28. Image of character’s “regret”

The Monsters of Men image (Figure 29 on the following page) is a book cover that was edited by the students for the story. It aligns with the character’s thoughts that he “lives with monsters of men.” When asked about this reference, Student #4 stated that he had heard the expression before, that it depicted cruelty and abuse and that this is what made him think it would be both an apt expression to use in the story as well as a vivid image.

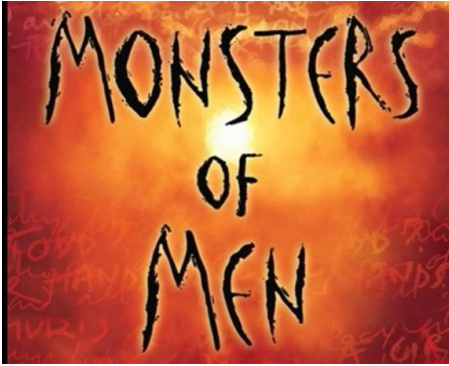


Figure 29. Image representing cruelty and abuse

The boys agreed that the image below, Figure 30, taken from the Deviant Art website is their favourite of the images and the most powerful. Student #4 stated, “We saw it and thought that it fit in perfectly.” They felt that it depicted the character in the story “sort of melting away—like his personality just left him, as if he just disappeared into dust.” This image aligned with the character fleeing and “leaving his fear and sadness behind.”



Figure 30. Image of character “melting away”

Lastly, the “Why Me?” image (Figure 31), which is also the title of the story, was likened and compared again to the “To This Day” YouTube digital story as the writer repeats the phrase “to this day” throughout the story. Student #3 stated that this was the inspiration for the title, and why they chose to end the story with this image. Student #4 adds that when he saw the image, it reminded him of the Amanda Todd case in BC in October of 2012 in which a teenager took her own life as a result of bullying and cyberbullying. Shortly before she died, she had posted a video on YouTube telling her story by using only written cue cards such as shown in the digital story. The boys used this as a tribute to Amanda and her story, and how bullying can have devastating results.

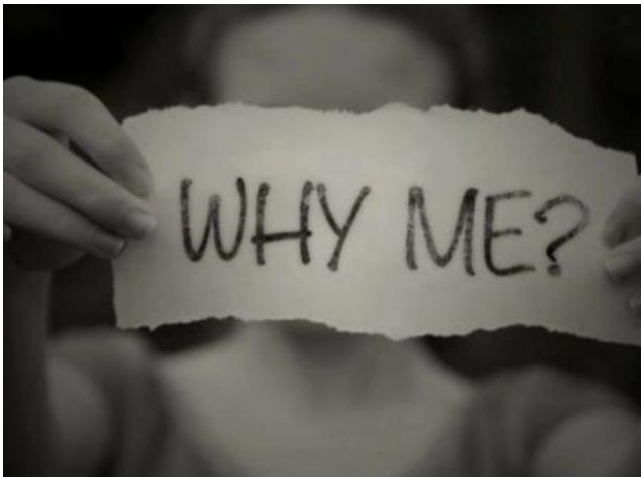


Figure 31. Hand-written image of title slide: “Why Me?”

6. Discussion

6.1. Overview

The goal of this research paper was to examine the effects of a digital storytelling project on increasing empathy and understanding in adolescent students for the bully, the bullied and the bystander. As outlined in the review of the literature in this paper, a great deal of existing research has been conducted into a number of other benefits of digital storytelling such as increasing student engagement in the learning material, honing vital 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication, improving digital literacy skills in students and raising awareness of social issues. In addition to discussing the findings that address the research question above, the discussion that follows comments on how each of these benefits of digital storytelling was observed during the course of the project.

6.2. Increasing Student Engagement

As the classroom teacher/researcher was in the room and observing closely while the students were formulating, designing and performing their digital texts, it was clear that the students were extremely engaged in the process. Digital storytelling was new to them, as was the use of software such as Photo Story, iMovie and Movie Maker. During and after the presentation of the stories, many of the students shared their thinking in terms of how they strove to engage their audience in the digital stories. One group wanted to “make an impact and do something unique” so they used spoken-word poetry. Another student wanted to help the audience “connect and be more enticed” so he emphasized the emotion in his voice. Several groups talked about how the combination of pictures, music and voiceover was chosen to keep the audience “engaged and interested.” Two of the groups used humour to engage the audience

and two more used “average” characters who were bullied for no obvious reason so that the audience would be able to relate to them. The majority of students agreed that digital storytelling was an effective way of engaging students in a meaningful discussion about bullying. As one student commented, “I believe that it is a great topic to talk about, which serves as a gateway to deeper, more serious talks about bullying and its effects.” Several other students talked about how the project kept their interest through its digital component: “Because everybody uses media, so people can relate to things and understand things that are presented using digital media compared to reading a book, which might not help as much.” And, similarly, “I think it is an effective way because you cannot portray certain things through writing or other ways. It helps you connect in many different ways that I couldn’t have done with a pen and paper.” As another student stated, “It keeps attention, it makes it fun and it’s not a typical project.” And, as one student succinctly summarized, “Nowadays kids can relate to technology more than just a blank piece of paper. You can also put way more expression into technology than paper.”

6.3. Developing 21st Century Skills

As is often the case in the adolescent classroom, the use of a new technology such as digital storytelling becomes a valuable tool not only increasing engagement but also in developing skills such as creativity and innovation, critical thinking, communication and collaboration, skills that students will be expected to acquire and build as effective 21st century learners (Czarnecki, 2009; Trilling & Fadel, 2009; “Partnership for 21st Century Skills,” 2011). Allowing the students to express their creativity and encouraging them to be producers instead of merely consumers of information through digital storytelling provided them with the freedom to explore the subject in innovative ways. As one student stated: It “gave me a sense of freedom. I

did not feel restricted to the paper like I do using a pen. It was so much easier to write using the keyboard.” A second student agreed by stating, “We could get more creative with our ideas and use cool effects that you can’t make on pencil and paper.” By working with others, the students were given an opportunity to develop their skills in the areas of communication and collaboration, two skills that will become increasingly valuable in their academic and professional lives. As one student stated, the assignment “helped my group express our ideas because there weren’t any limitations on how we created the product.” This required a great deal of planning and critical thought in terms of how the stories would come together. The comments and observations that the students made during and after their own presentations and those of their peers confirmed that a great deal of higher level thinking went into the planning, construction, and performance of their stories. For example, as one student commented, “I believe that my group’s voice acting really helped people feel the emotion behind the dialogue that would seem grey and dull on pen and paper.” This comment demonstrates the use of higher level thinking skills such as analyzing, evaluating and creating (Forehand, 2005).

6.4. Refining Digital Literacies

By availing themselves of the multimodal affordances of digital storytelling, the students were able to express their ideas and views in a way that they found to be much more creative, expressive and meaningful to both the producers of the work and the audience. As each individual engaged in these situated practices where they made meanings by relating the texts to their own lives, thoughts and experiences, they were developing their literacies skills. (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008).

The students felt that they could explore the topic on a deeper level by combining the elements of voice, image, sound and text to express their emotions and “to get the message out

there.” As one student explained, “[The project] enabled me to express my views in ways that I couldn’t have done with simply a pen and paper. Without technology I couldn’t have created the sounds or music associated with bullying. The emotions portrayed wouldn’t have been able to be expressed to viewers through writing.” Several of the students commented that the music and the use of voiceover created a certain mood of the story and that having the choice of using hand-drawn images, photographs, existing digital images or a combination of all three afforded them the creativity and the flexibility to design a unique and customized story that reflected both their views and clearly expressed their voice. As one student summed up, the digital stories had a “more abstract and deeper feel” and technology was used “as a catalyst for something greater than we could achieve with pen and paper.” A second student concurred and added that she learned that “technology has a vital part in learning.” These comments speak to the larger picture of technology as a tool to facilitate the construction of new knowledge and products, of “mastering ideas, not keystrokes” (Gilster, 1997), and as a means of communicating with others in authentic situations, in order to enable social interaction and self-reflection (Martin, 2006).

6.5. Building Empathy, Understanding and Social Awareness for the Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander

As outlined in the previous section, it is clear that the digital storytelling project that was completed in this classroom had a noticeable effect on many of the students. The results in the Likert scale scores between the pre-surveys and the post-surveys showed a notable increase in the levels of both empathy and understanding that students felt for the roles of the bully, the bullied and the bystander. Additionally, the responses of the students to the interview questions indicate that the project has not only raised awareness for the victims of bullying, the bullied and the bystander, but has inspired some students to take action against bullying. For example, one

student stated that the project “has made me want to stop it more. I also now want to make sure that everybody realizes how big a problem it actually is and what we can do.” Another student shared the following: “This project has inspired me to stand up for myself as I usually just sit there and take it, while I have always stood up for other people.” Yet another student simply stated, “It makes me want to help people.”

Several other students acknowledged the fact that the project raised their awareness of bullying, helped them realize that it can occur in many forms and showed them that we have a responsibility to stand up for the victims and to try to gain a deeper understanding of the bullies. When asked how working on the project and watching and discussing the other digital stories affected their views on the bully, the bullied and the bystander, a number of common themes were made apparent. Several of the students stated that their view on the different roles that can be played in bullying was broadened, that they have a better understanding of the three roles, and that they now can more fully appreciate that “each of the three has different reasons for acting the way they do.” As one student stated, “all the stories gave a different view, which affected the way I see bullying.” Another student concurred and offered, “it gave me a different perspective on the three different views, the bully, victim and bystander.”

One of the most notable changes that occurred as a result of the digital story project was the students’ new understanding of and empathy for the bully. Several students came to the important realization that there is more to the bully than it seems, and even more significantly, they commented that they learned how the bully feels and that there are underlying reasons in the bully’s life that have led to the behaviour. As one student stated, “[the project] let me see why people bully and the effect it has on the victim.” This demonstrates both an increase in understanding and empathy, which was the goal of the research. As one student sums up, “Now

I know that the bullies have had something traumatize them in the early years so I can empathize with them.”

6.6. Research Challenges and Limitations

The most significant research challenge in this research project was how to accurately measure the degree of change in student understanding of and empathy for the bully, the bullied and the bystander. It is believed that the use of several types of data collection methods including both qualitative and quantitative surveys, open-ended questions, observation and case studies has provided data that are rich, varied, representative and of sufficient quantity in order to permit the drawing of reasonable research conclusions. However, the use of a Likert scale in this research carried with it the limitations that occur in many self-assessment surveys; the accuracy of the data is dependent upon how accurately the students assessed their own understandings of and empathy for the bully, the bullied and the bystander. It was for this reason that the researcher chose to have the students explain and expand upon their responses in all six of the question areas, both in the pre-survey and in the post-survey.

A second challenge involved constraints in terms of time and resources within the classroom environment. Students had a fixed amount of class time and limited access to technological resources in order to complete their digital stories. It is hoped that the students had sufficient time to design, edit and present their stories and to create thoughtful, personally meaningful pieces that reflect the full extent of their capabilities in terms of expressing their ideas, feelings and opinions. All efforts were made to ensure that the students had as much time, support and access to necessary resources as possible.

It is also important to recognize the limitations of this project as the students participated in a number of anti-bullying initiatives during the course of the school year including reading novels, examining digital resources, contributing to a class social networking site to convey their thoughts on bullying and listening to a guest speaker on the topic. It is difficult to pinpoint which understandings stem from these activities and which can be conclusively and solely attributed to the digital storytelling assignment.

As an inquiry-based learning experience, the students were given a great deal of choice in how they approached, designed and presented their digital stories. It is perhaps unfortunate that in exercising their creative freedom, most of the students focused on the victims of bullying and none of the students chose to explore bullying from the standpoint of the bystander. In a future research project it would be desirable to encourage the students to take a more balanced approach to ensure that all three viewpoints are explored more equitably in the course of the project.

It is important to note that this study was highly contextualized and contained a small sample of students who could be considered to be quite homogeneous in terms of their socio-economic status. Accordingly, the findings of the study are not necessarily extendable to student groups in more diverse economic sections of the region, where privilege is less prevalent. However, digital storytelling as a learning activity is one that can be employed in any young adolescent classroom, regardless of socio-economic factors.

Lastly, although every effort was made for the researcher to remain neutral in terms of expectations and hopes for the outcome of the project, admittedly a certain degree of bias existed in the project in that the researcher hoped to see some evidence of increased empathy for and understanding of victims of bullying, the bully the bystander.

6.7. Future Research

It is unquestionable that our society feels the negative impacts of bullying, particularly in the school environment, and that teachers have an important role to play in building awareness and in endeavouring to enact and drive social change (Ohler, 2005; Olweus, 1993). Conducting and studying the results of this type of research in terms of its effects in increasing interest in the topic of bullying, in understanding the reasons for bullying and in the prevention of future bullying, is arguably taking the first steps in the pursuit of solutions to this pervasive social issue that affects so many students in our society today. Additionally, providing the students with an opportunity to construct, refine and build their knowledge about bullying, its root causes and its devastating effects by interacting with the topic in a socially constructivist way can potentially pave the way to inspiring them to become agents of change (Burke, Hughes, Thompson & Hardware, 2013; Bruner, 1994; Hull & Katz, 2006). It is hoped that by raising awareness of the effects of bullying, students will begin to develop an increased sense of social responsibility towards the reduction of bullying events. There are a number of opportunities for researchers in terms of tracking students' long-term anti-bullying actions by conducting longitudinal studies. Today's teachers have a unique opportunity to motivate their students to become catalysts for change. By availing themselves of the limitless possibilities offered by the multimodal affordances of digital storytelling, they are uniquely positioned to increase awareness and hopefully drive change in the area of social justice, and specifically in bullying prevention.

This research demonstrates the need for additional research to be done in the area of educating students about their role as bystanders. The fact that so little change was demonstrated between their pre-survey and post-survey results and in their comments about empathy and

understanding for bystanders shows that there is an opportunity for educators to improve their efforts in this area.

Although schools, school boards and ministries of education in this country believe that they are raising awareness of and working towards reducing the number of bullying incidents through various school-based initiatives, it is perhaps most effectively done at the classroom level through focused, open-ended, problem-based and inquiry-based activities such as digital storytelling. Inquiry-based learning is a process used to “solve problems, create new knowledge, resolve doubts, and find the truth” (Watt & Colyer, 2014, p. 3). Digital storytelling lends itself particularly well to inquiry-based learning as it involves working collaboratively and respecting diverse opinions and voices of others while seeking solutions to authentic, real life problems such as bullying. As increasing numbers of educators across the world begin to explore inquiry-based learning, perhaps this will be the conduit through which real progress can be made in reducing bullying in our schools.

7. Summary and Conclusions

There is an abundance of literature pointing to the advantages of engaging adolescents in meaningful learning through the use of technology. Rich tasks such as digital storytelling offer benefits in many aspects of learning such as the use of technology to teach meaningful content in a way that meets the needs of a variety of learners (Mishra & Koehler, 2009) and engaging problem-based tasks that offer a means for students to reflect on their prior knowledge and understandings (Barrett, 2006). These performance-based tasks provide students with a vehicle for exploring and expanding their world views, which can lead to an increased awareness of social issues and the development and exercise of their social power (Bauman & Briggs, 1990).

This research project invited students to engage in creative storytelling through the use of digital technology, by working collaboratively to construct their own multimodal stories in exploring the topic of bullying. Since the research points to several advantages in the use of digital storytelling as an engaging pedagogical strategy (Karakoyun & Eristi, 2011; Robin, 2008; Sadik, 2008; Wang & Zhan, 2010; Yang & Wu, 2012) that develops a wide variety of 21st century skills such as creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking (Czarnecki, 2009; Trilling & Fadel, 2009; “Partnership for 21st Century Skills,” 2011) as well as building digital literacy skills in students (Hughes & Tolley, 2010; Hull & Katz, 2006), this particular study focused primarily on digital storytelling as a way of developing empathy and understanding for the bully, the bullied and the bystander.

The students participating in this project provided both quantitative and qualitative data related to their pre- and post-project levels of empathy and understanding for the bully, the bullied, and the bystander. By examining their survey results, their digital stories and the videotaped presentations and class discussions, a number of conclusions can be drawn with respect to the efficacy of this study.

Overall, the students demonstrated a notable increase in their levels of empathy and understanding for the bullied and the bully, and a smaller, but still noteworthy increase in empathy and understanding for the bystander. These findings were further supported by their comments in the pre- and post-surveys which specifically articulated their new understandings as a result of participating in the project. The data are further triangulated through the performance of the digital stories and by examination and comparison with the class discussion transcripts and detailed case studies. Despite the work the students did in the eight-week unit on bullying that preceded the digital stories, these findings suggest that the digital story assignment encouraged shifts in student attitudes towards bullying.

It can be proposed that the use of digital storytelling as a vehicle for raising awareness of important, relevant and pervasive social issues such as bullying in adolescents is likely a worthwhile and effective pedagogical strategy. As the prevalence and focus on bullying and cyberbullying in schools continues to garner media attention and drive educational policy, it is up to provincial regulatory bodies, faculties of education, school administrators and educators to find creative, meaningful and impactful ways of raising student awareness and ultimately driving social change to reduce or eliminate bullying in schools.

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Appendix A: Pre-Survey and Post-Survey Questions

*1. In general, how well do you understand the feelings of victims of bullying?

Not at all	Some understanding	A good deal of understanding	A great deal of understanding
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Explain your answer in a short paragraph, providing as much detail and as many examples as possible.

*2. In general, how much do you empathize with the feelings of victims of bullying?

Not at all	Some understanding	A good deal of understanding	A great deal of understanding
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Explain your answer in a short paragraph, providing as much detail and as many examples as possible.

*3. In general, how well do you understand the feelings of bullies?

Not at all	Some understanding	A good deal of understanding	A great deal of understanding
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Explain your answer in a short paragraph, providing as much detail and as many examples as possible.

*4. In general, how much do you empathize with the feelings of bullies?

Not at all	Some understanding	A good deal of understanding	A great deal of understanding
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Explain your answer in a short paragraph, providing as much detail and as many examples as possible.

*5. In general, how well do you understand the feelings of bystanders?

Not at all	Some understanding	A good deal of understanding	A great deal of understanding
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Explain your answer in a short paragraph, providing as much detail and as many examples as possible.

*6. In general, how much do you empathize with the feelings of bystanders?

Not at all	Some understanding	A good deal of understanding	A great deal of understanding
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Explain your answer in a short paragraph, providing as much detail and as many examples as possible.

Appendix B: Sample Discussion Questions

1. How did working on this project/watching other stories affect your views on the bully, the bullied and the bystander?
2. Why did you choose the images/sounds/music/text/characters that you did?
3. How did using digital media provide opportunities for expressing your ideas in different ways (i.e. using images, voiceover, music, etc.) compared to just using paper and pen?
4. What did you do to ensure that your audience could relate to your digital story and that would feel empathy and/or understanding for the characters?
5. What elements did you include to ensure that your audience was engaged in your story?
6. In what ways has this project inspired/encouraged you to take action on the issues that concern you such as bullying?
7. What kinds of things did you learn about the use of technology by doing this project?
8. What challenges did you face when participating in this project?
9. Do you think that digital storytelling is an effective way of getting students to talk about important social issues such as bullying?

Appendix C: Table of Pre-Survey Responses

Pre-survey Data							
Student #	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Total
1	3	3	3	3	2	1	15
2	4	4	2	2	3	3	18
3	3	4	3	1	2	1	14
4	3	3	2	3	2	2	15
5	2	3	2	1	4	2	14
6	3	4	3	2	3	2	17
7	3	3	3	2	3	2	16
8	2	2	2	1	2	2	11
9	2	3	1	1	3	2	12
10	3	3	3	3	3	2	17
11	3	3	2	1	4	4	17
12	3	3	3	2	2	3	16
13	4	4	2	2	1	1	14
14	2	2	2	1	3	2	12
15	3	3	2	2	4	1	15
16	3	4	3	2	3	2	17
17	3	3	3	2	4	2	17
18	4	3	4	3	3	2	19
19	3	2	2	2	3	2	14
20	2	2	2	1	3	2	12
21	4	4	4	3	3	3	21
22	2	2	2	2	3	2	13
Total	64	67	55	42	63	45	336

Appendix D: Table of Post-Survey Responses

Post-survey Data								
Student #	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Total	
1	4	4	3	3	2	3	19	+4
2	4	4	3	2	4	4	21	+3
3	3	4	2	1	1	1	12	-2
4	3	3	2	3	2	2	15	
5	4	4	4	4	2	1	19	+5
6	3	4	2	3	3	2	17	
7	4	3	4	2	3	3	19	+3
8	3	3	2	2	2	2	14	+3
9	4	2	3	2	2	2	15	+3
10	3	4	3	3	3	4	20	+3
11	4	2	3	2	4	4	19	+2
12	4	4	3	3	4	4	22	+6
13	4	4	3	2	3	2	18	+4
14	3	3	3	2	3	3	17	+5
15	4	3	4	2	3	1	17	+2
16	4	4	3	1	3	2	17	
17	4	3	3	2	3	3	18	+1
18	4	2	4	3	3	2	18	-1
19	4	3	3	2	3	3	18	+4
20	3	3	4	2	3	4	19	+7
21	4	4	4	4	4	2	22	+1
22	4	3	4	4	2	1	18	+5
Total	81	73	69	54	62	55	394	+58

Appendix E: Table of Overview of Elements of Digital Stories

	Story 1	Story 2	Story 3	Story 4	Story 5	Story 6	Story 7	Story 8	Story 9
Title	Timothy	The Betrayal	Paradise	That One Mute Girl	Why Me?	The Story of PSY	Paul	Mitchell's Story	The Cupcake and the Muffin
Students	9,11	6,8,20	22	5,15,19	3,4	18,21	13,14,16	1,10,12	2,7,17
Point of View	Bullied	Bullied	Bullied	Bullied	Bully	Bullied	Bullied	Bullied	Bullied
Images	Hand-drawn	Hand-drawn	Hand-drawn	Internet Hand-drawn	Internet	Filmed	Internet Hand-drawn	Filmed	Internet
Music	Piano	None	Lyrics and Music	Lyrics and Music	Lyrics and Music	Lyrics and Music	Piano	Lyrics and Music	Instrumental, Lyrics and Music
Voices	Narrated	Narrated and Characters speak	Narrated	Narrated by main character	Narrated	Narrated and Characters speak	Narrated and Characters speak	Narrated and Characters speak	Narrated and Characters speak
Setting	School and Home	School	School and Home	School and Home	School and Home	School and Home	School and Home	School and Home	School and Bakery
Type of Bullying	Relational- (Exclusion)	Verbal, Relational- (Exclusion) & Physical	Verbal, Relational- (Exclusion) & Cyber	Verbal & Physical- (Destruction of Property)	Verbal & Physical	Verbal, Relational- (Exclusion) & Cyber	Verbal & Physical- (Destruction of Property)	Verbal	Verbal & Relational- (Exclusion)
Reason for Targeting	Is known as a loner	None	Physical Traits	Voicing Unpopular Opinion/ Muteness	Bullied at Home	Unusual Behaviour/ Mental Illness	None	Learning Disability	Physical Traits
Home Situation	Parents in conflict with one another and with the main character	N/A	Single parent; financial struggles and lack of support	Family conflicts	Abuse of main character	Conflict with parents and lack of understanding	Lack of support from parents	Supportive	N/A
Resolution	Makes a new friend and is accepted by peers	Bullying stops and makes a new friend	Defends herself and bullying stops	Bullying stops, becomes advocate and child psychologist as an adult	Escapes the bullying cycle	Bullying stops and becomes accepted by peers	New friends stand up to bully and bullying stops; becomes an advocate	Stands up for himself and bullying stops	Bullies realize they are wrong and bullying stops
Audience Feedback	Relatable; characters seemed real; music helped express emotion	Average kid was very connectable; friends leaving to make other friends is very common and relatable	Felt empathy and emotion for the character; bullies are often looking for a reaction so maybe Patricia's reaction is the part of the reason why she was targeted by the bullies	More emotion/ empathy is felt when the subject has a disability	Very real and powerful because it is told from the viewpoint of the bully	Realistic because it is filmed mostly at school which is where most bullying occurs	Shows how anyone can be bullied but unrealistic in terms of reactions of teacher (does not believe him) and parents (decide to move away)	Could relate to first day of school and feeling awkward; realistic as people with disabilities often get picked on for being different	Music made the story more emotional